

Ice Cream Man™

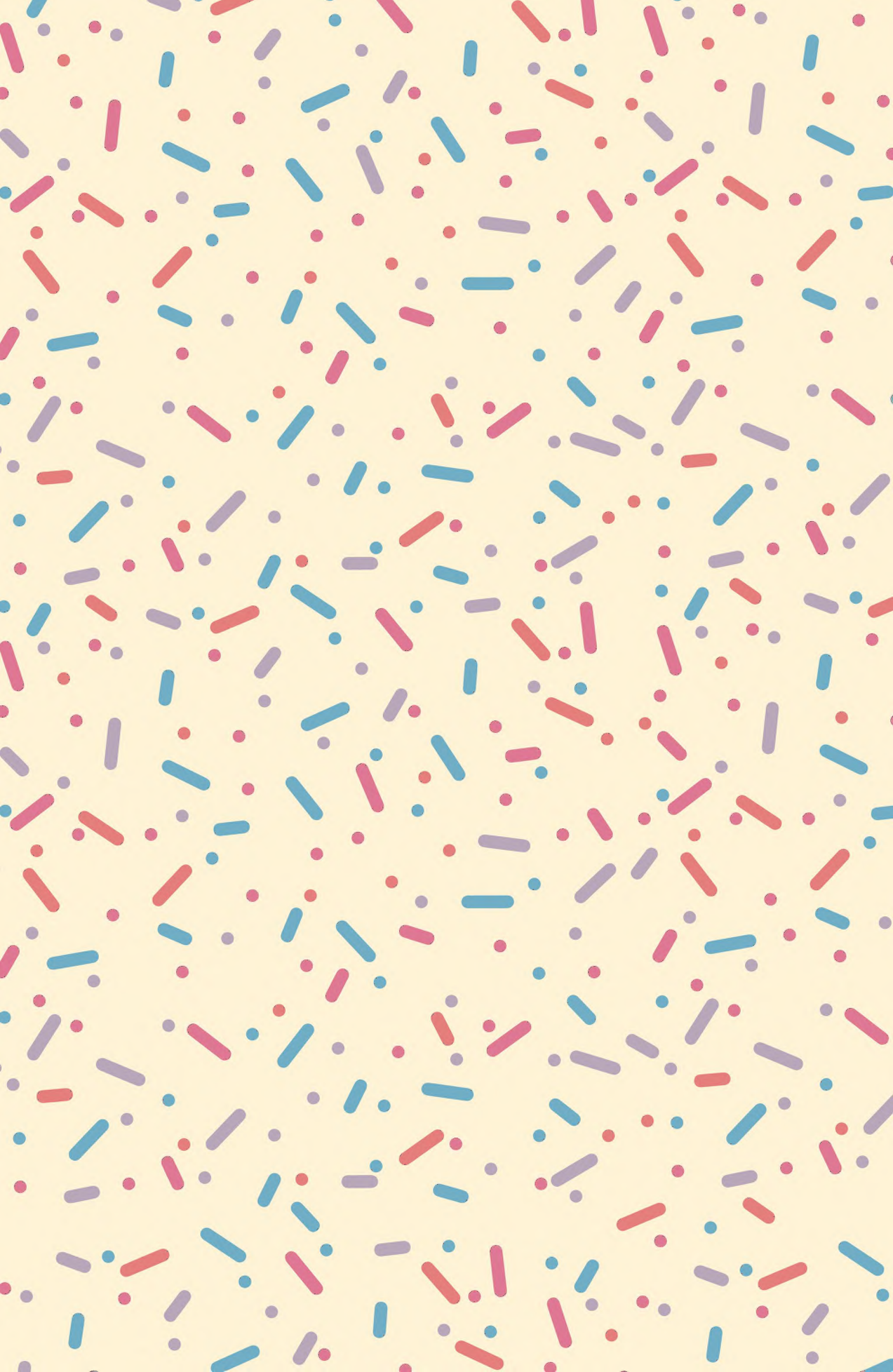


W. Maxwell Prince

Martín Morazzo

Chris O'Halloran

volume five





VOLUME FIVE

• OTHER CONFECTIONS •

WRITTEN BY **W. MAXWELL PRINCE**

ART BY **MARTÍN MORAZZO**

COLORS BY **CHRIS O'HALLORAN**

LETTERING BY **GOOD OLD NEON**

COVER DESIGN BY **SHANNA MATUSZAK & TRICIA RAMOS**

INTERIOR DESIGN BY **GOOD OLD NEON**



IMAGE COMICS, INC.

Robert Kirkman – Chief Operating Officer

Erik Larsen – Chief Financial Officer

Todd McFarlane – President

Marc Silvestri – Chief Executive Officer

Jim Valentino – Vice-President

Eric Stephenson – Publisher/Chief Creative Officer

Jeff Boison – Director of Sales & Publishing Planning

Jeff Stang – Director of Direct Market Sales

Kat Salazar – Director of PR & Marketing

Drew Gill – Cover Editor

Heather Doornink – Production Director

Nicole Lapalme – Controller

IMAGECOMICS.COM

"Have I mentioned that I expect death around every turn, that every blue sky has a safe sailing out of it, that every bus runs me over, that every low, mean syllable uttered in my direction seems to intimate the violence of murder, that every family seems like an opportunity for ruin and every marriage a ceremony into which calamity will fall and hearts will be broken and lives destroyed and people branded by the mortifications of love?"

–Rick Moody, *The Mansion On the Hill*

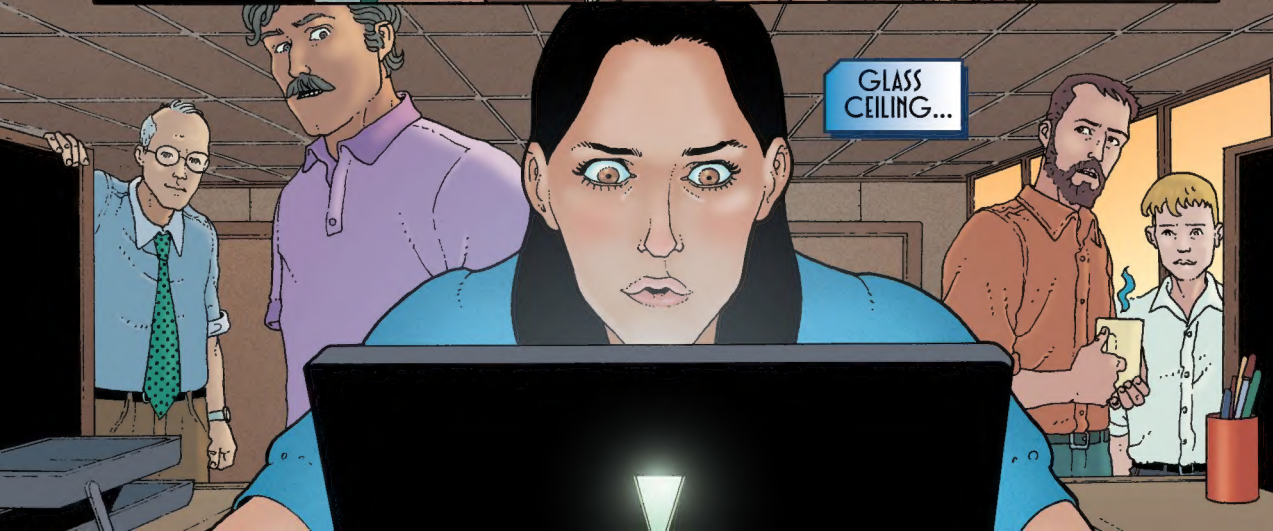
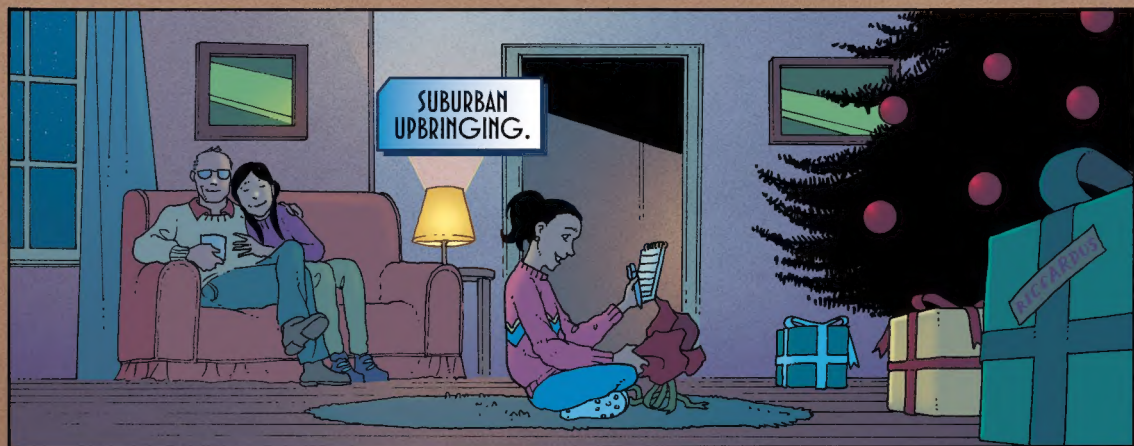
What do you remember?
Email wmaxwellprince@gmail.com

ICE CREAM MAN, VOL. 5: OTHER CONFECTIONS. September 2020. Published by Image Comics, Inc. Office of publication: 2701 NW Vaughn St., Suite 780, Portland, OR 97210. Copyright © 2020 W. Maxwell Prince, Martín Morazzo & Chris O'Halloran. All rights reserved. Contains material originally published in single magazine form as ICE CREAM MAN #17-20. "Ice Cream Man," its logos, and the likenesses of all characters herein are trademarks of W. Maxwell Prince, Martín Morazzo & Chris O'Halloran unless otherwise noted. "Image" and the Image Comics logos are registered trademarks of Image Comics, Inc. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted, in any form or by any means (except for short excerpts for journalistic or review purposes), without the express written permission of W. Maxwell Prince, Martín Morazzo & Chris O'Halloran, or Image Comics, Inc. All names, characters, events, and locales in this publication are entirely fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons (living or dead), events, or places, without satiric intent, is coincidental. DIGITAL EDITION. For international rights, contact: foreignlicensing@imagecomics.com.

Chapter 20 contains parodic takes on existing works.

CONF~~F~~CTION COMICS

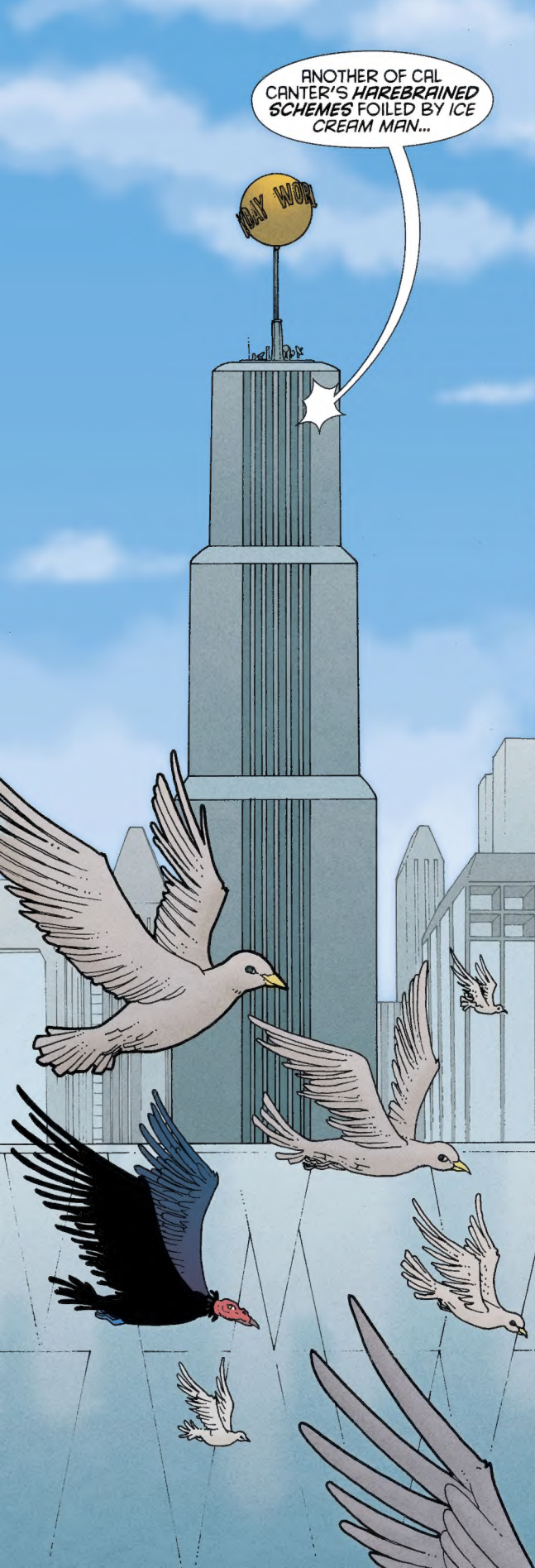




...**SHATTERED!**



The **All-Star** Story
of Peerless Reporter
Parker Paige
and Her Date with
Ice Cream Man!



ANOTHER OF CAL
CANTER'S *HAREBRAINED*
SCHEMES FOILED BY ICE
CREAM MAN...



GUY'S GOT A
ZILLION DOLLARS
AND *THIS* IS WHAT HE
COMES UP WITH?

COWBOY
ROBOTS?!



WHAT ABOUT
MY PIECE ON THE
SYRIAN GOVERNMENT?
WAR CRIMES,
CHIEF.

THEY'RE
USING SARIN
GAS ON
KIDS!



WAR CRIMES
DON'T SELL PAPERS,
PAIGE. PEOPLE WANT
HOPE FOR A BETTER
TOMORROW.

TAKE A
CUE FROM RICK
SWEET AND WRITE
ABOUT OUR BIG
WHITE HERO IN
THE SKY.



SOMEONE
SAY MY NAME?

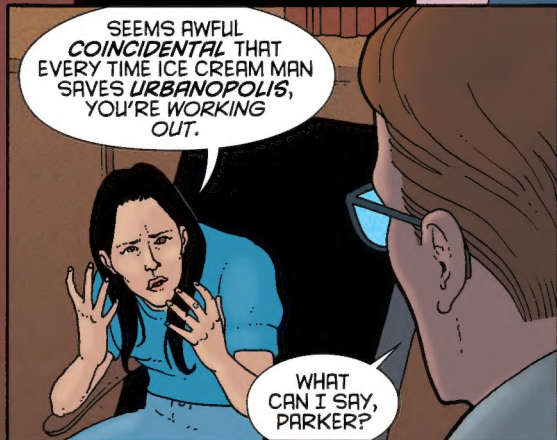


SORRY
I'M LATE! GOT
CAUGHT UP AT
THE GYM.

LOOKING
BUFF, RICK!

-Tt-

BRAWN
MAKES THE
MAN!

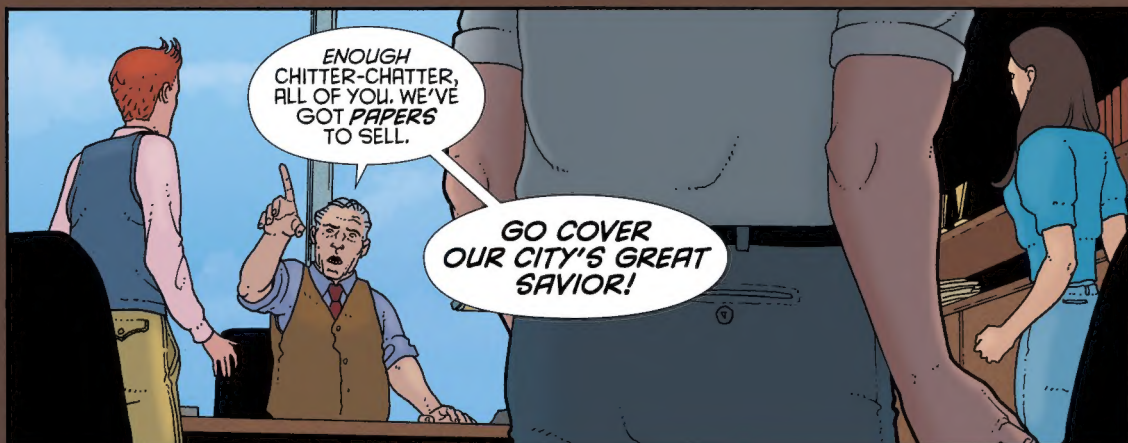


SEEMS AWFUL
COINCIDENTAL THAT
EVERY TIME ICE CREAM MAN
SAVES *URBANOPOLIS*,
YOU'RE WORKING
OUT.

WHAT
CAN I SAY,
PARKER?



THIS
UNASSUMING
COUNTRY LUMMOX
LOVES TO STAY IN
SHAPE!



ENOUGH
CHITTER-CHATTER,
ALL OF YOU. WE'VE
GOT *PAPERS*
TO SELL.

GO COVER
OUR CITY'S GREAT
SAVIOR!



They call Ice Cream Man our savior.

Like Jesus of Nazareth...except he wears *bleached pajamas* and a *cape*.

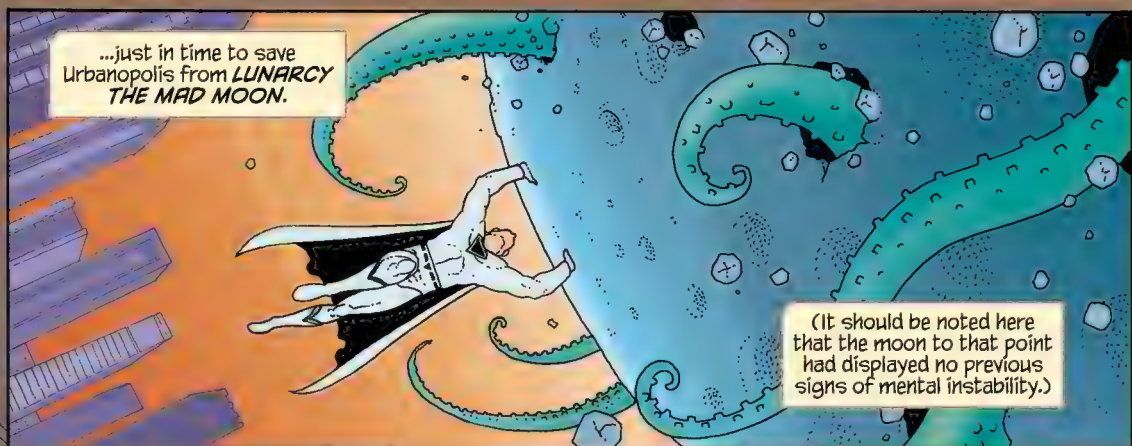


Big White, The Man of Titanium, McCreamy...there's no shortage of cute little monikers.



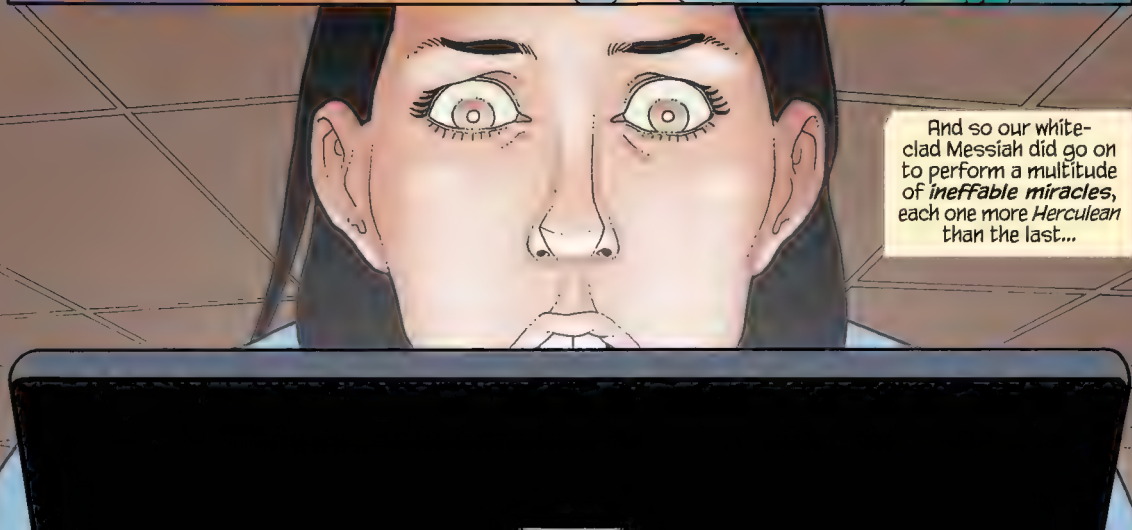
Whatever you want to call him, the *truth* is the same:

Ice Cream Man showed up three years ago out of *absolutely nowhere*. Like a magic trick-- *POOF* and he's there in the sky...



...just in time to save Urbanopolis from *LUNARCY THE MAD MOON*.

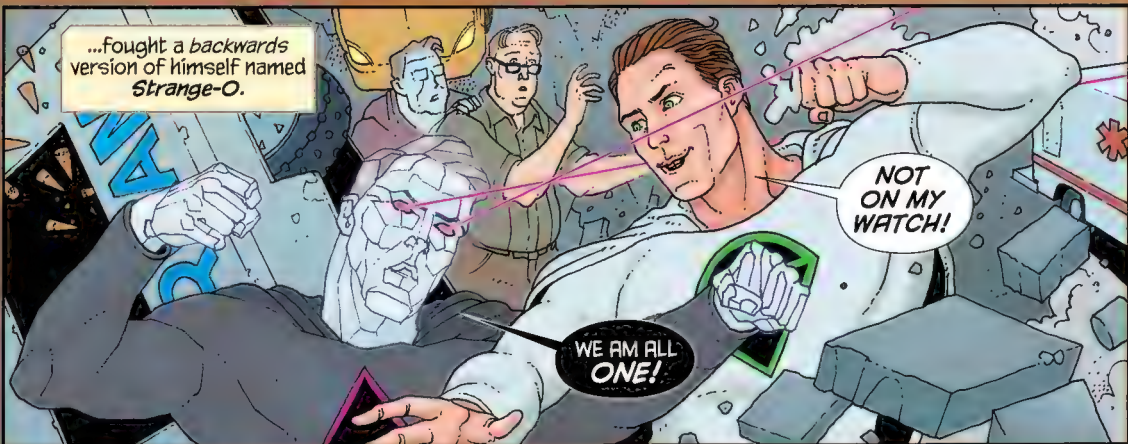
(It should be noted here that the moon to that point had displayed no previous signs of mental instability.)



And so our white-clad Messiah did go on to perform a multitude of *ineffable miracles*, each one more *Herculean* than the last...



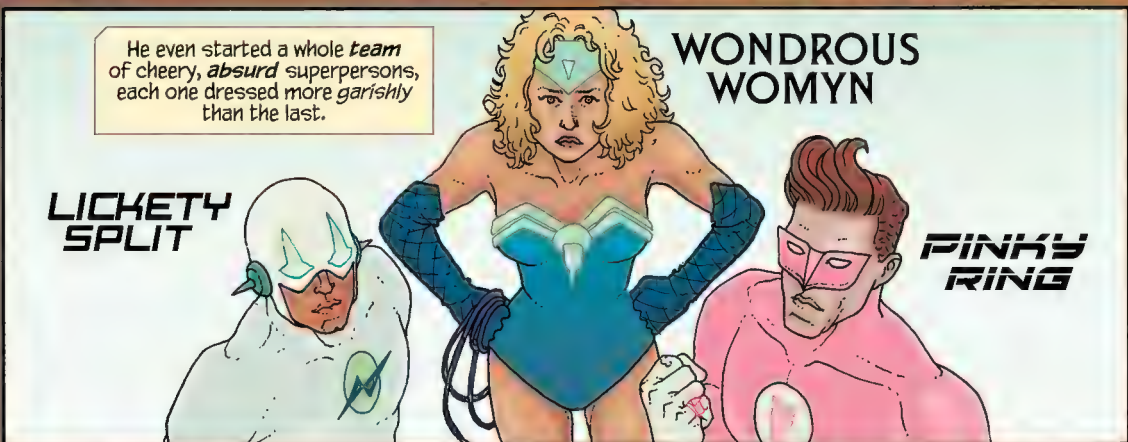
He conquered a race of cat-eating werewolves from the forests of Saint Generous City.



...fought a backwards version of himself named *Strange-O*.

NOT ON MY WATCH!

WE AM ALL ONE!



He even started a whole *team* of cheery, *absurd* superpersons, each one dressed more *garishly* than the last.

WONDROUS WOMYN

LICKETY SPLIT

PINKY RING



But I'd like to posit that the *idea* of Ice Cream Man is a *bad* one.

MISS PAIGE... YOU GOTTA SEE THIS!

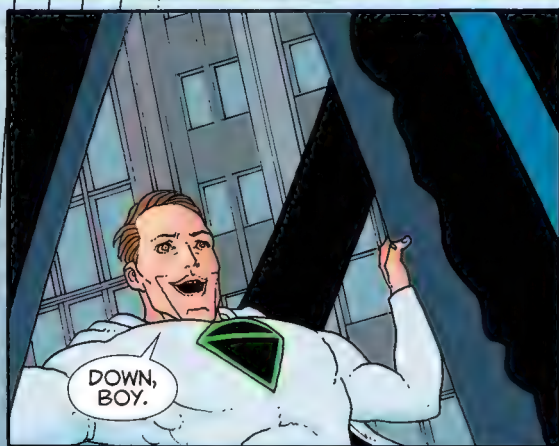
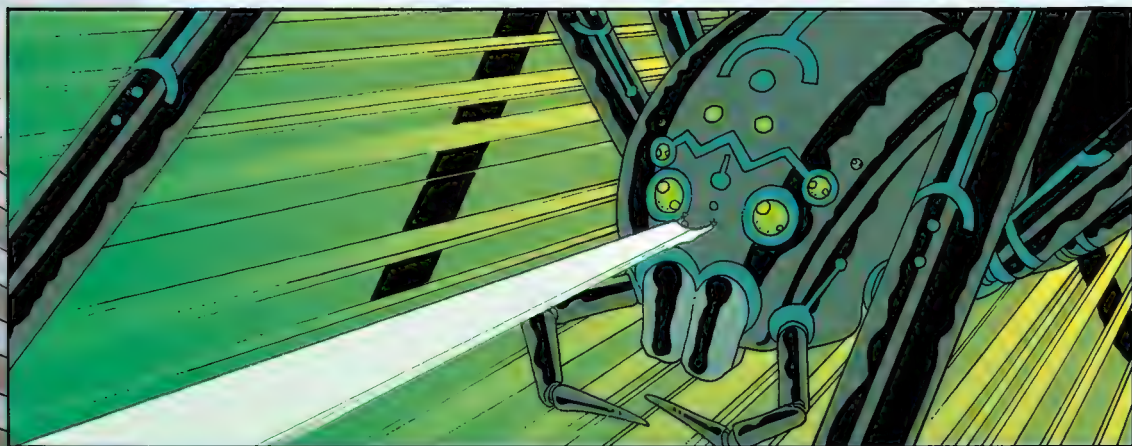


GOSH, GOLLY, GEE...

Something is *very* wrong in Urbanopolis.



**A GIANT SPIDER
IS ATTACKING THE
CITY!!**



...it's an *abdication* of
our human responsibility
today.

People are suffering
everywhere you look.

HE'S
HURLING
IT INTO THE
SUN!

Tomorrow is
too late.

I'VE GOT
WRITING TO
FINISH.

HE'S NOT
WHAT EVERYONE
THINKS HE
IS...



CAL CANTER?!
YOU'RE SUPPOSED
TO BE IN JAIL!

YOU CAN'T
IMPRISON A
FEELING.



THIS WORLD
ISN'T YOUR OWN,
MISS PAIGE. IT'S A
FARCE--ONE OF HIS
PLAY PLACES.

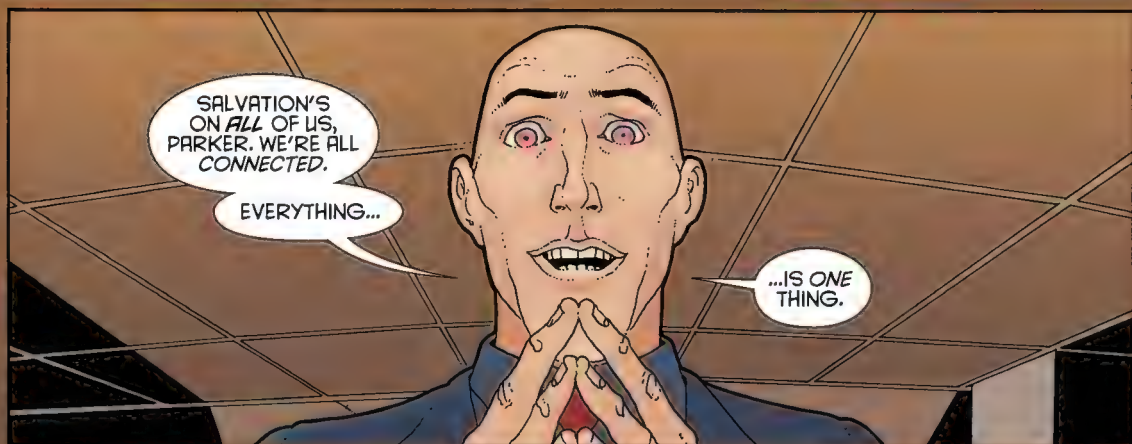
I'M
CALLING THE
COPS.

HE'S GRAFTED
A CHILD'S MYTHOLOGY
ONTO THE SKIN OF
YOUR REALITY...



SAVE IT
FOR THE FEDS,
BUCKO.

ONE MAN
TO SAVE US ALL?
YOU KNOW BETTER
THAN THAT.



SALVATION'S
ON *ALL* OF US,
PARKER. WE'RE ALL
CONNECTED.

EVERYTHING...

...IS ONE
THING.

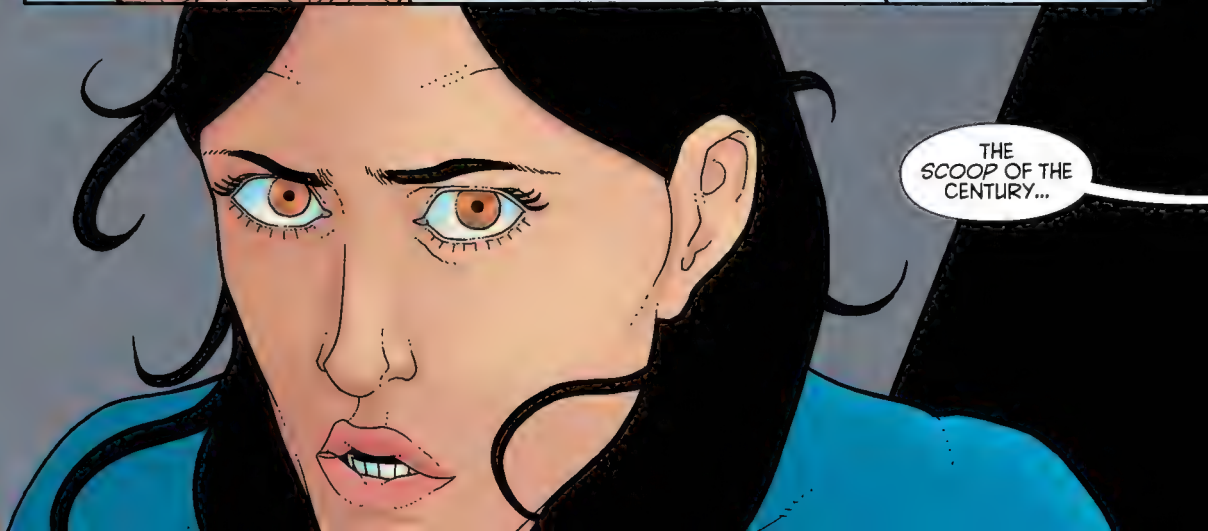
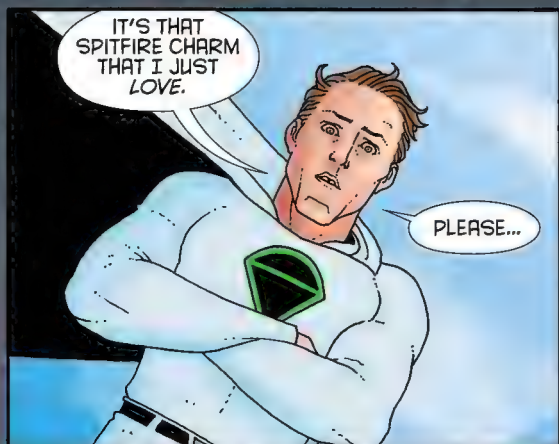


PARKER
PAIGE!



YOU CAN
COME OUT
NOW.

THE BIG
CREEPY-CRAWLY IS
ALL GONE.



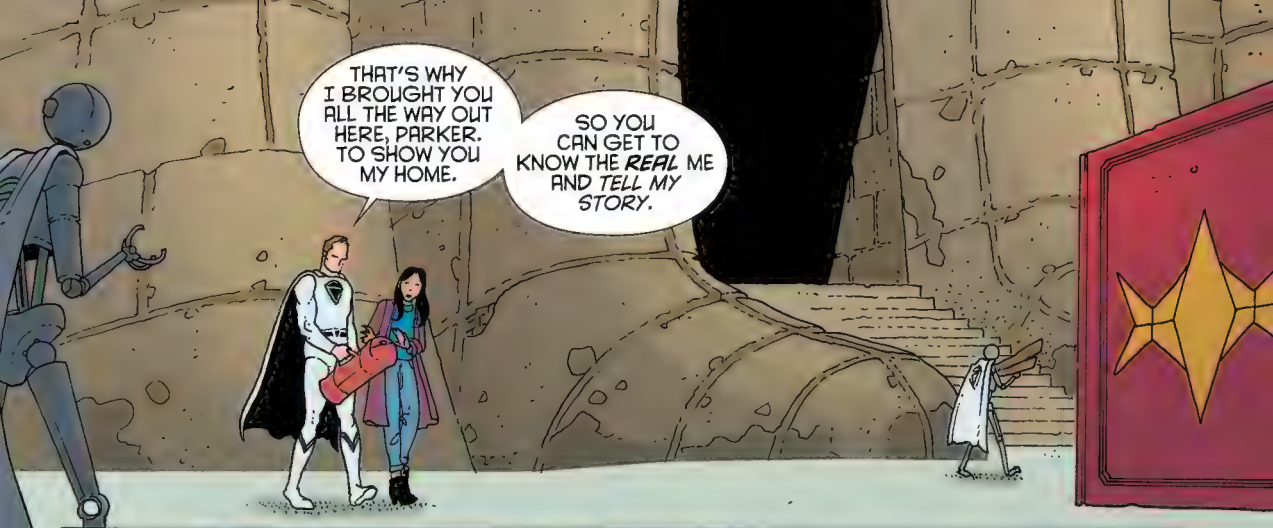
YOU'RE
RICK SWEET.

SURPRISED?

NOT
REALLY. IT
WAS KIND OF
OBVIOUS.

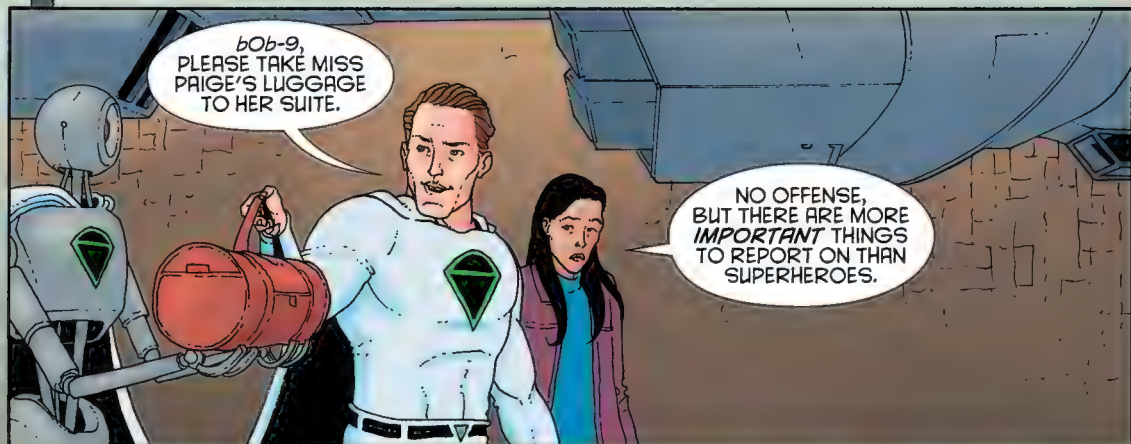
...THIS
PLACE IS
UNREAL.





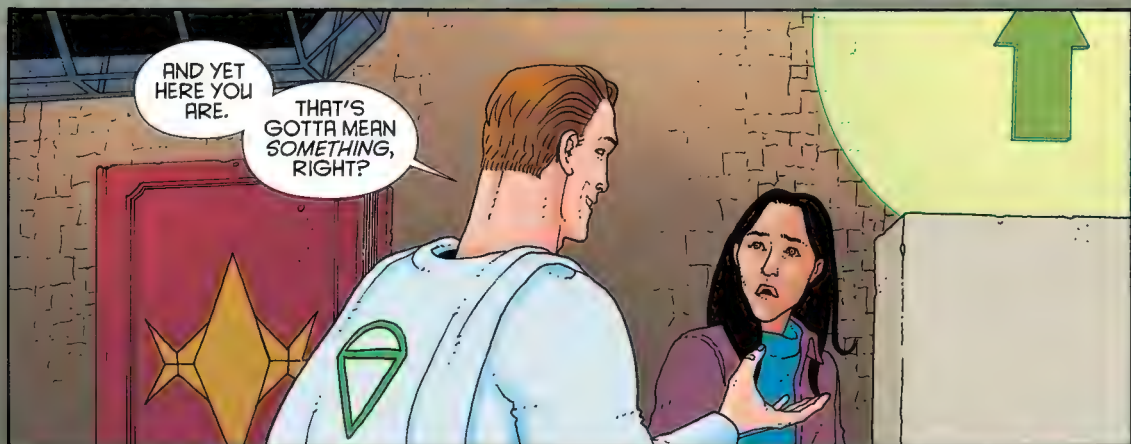
THAT'S WHY
I BROUGHT YOU
ALL THE WAY OUT
HERE, PARKER.
TO SHOW YOU
MY HOME.

SO YOU
CAN GET TO
KNOW THE *REAL* ME
AND TELL MY
STORY.



bob-9,
PLEASE TAKE MISS
PRIGE'S LUGGAGE
TO HER SUITE.

NO OFFENSE,
BUT THERE ARE MORE
IMPORTANT THINGS
TO REPORT ON THAN
SUPERHEROES.



AND YET
HERE YOU
ARE.

THAT'S
GOTTA MEAN
SOMETHING,
RIGHT?



COME...

LET ME
SHOW YOU
SOME *AMAZING*
STUFF.



THESE ARE
DRIPPERS--LIQUID
SENTRIES FROM A
MUSICAL BASEMENT
DIMENSION.

THEY FEED
ON MELODY--THE
PROTEIN OF PURE
SONG.



Rock in
the morning! Rock
around noon!



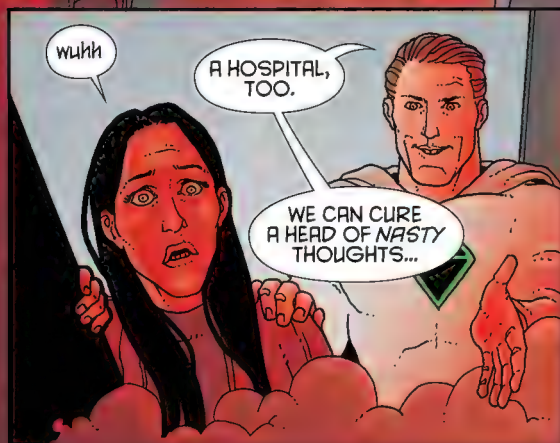
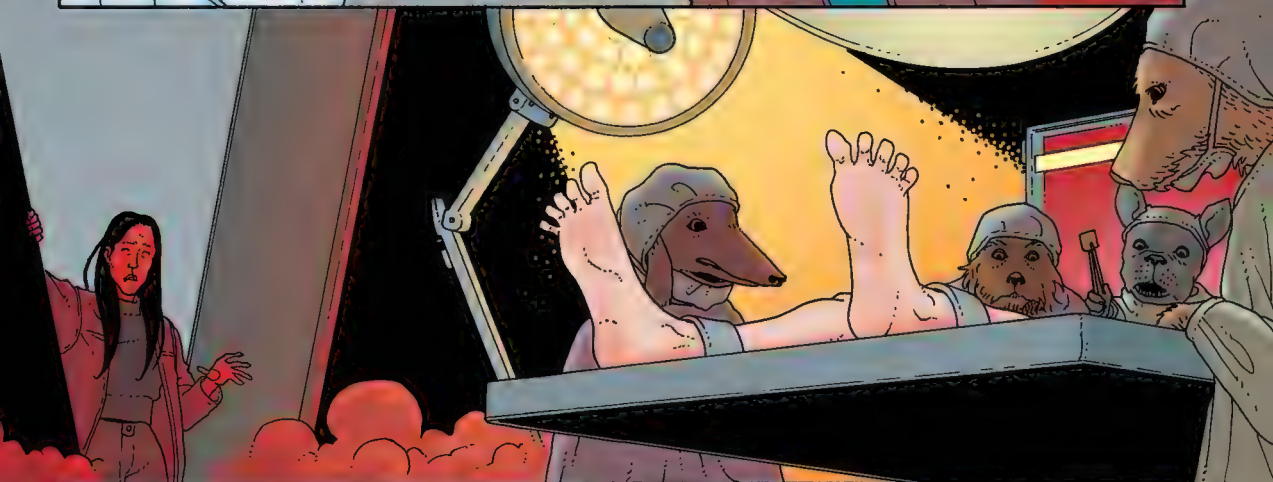
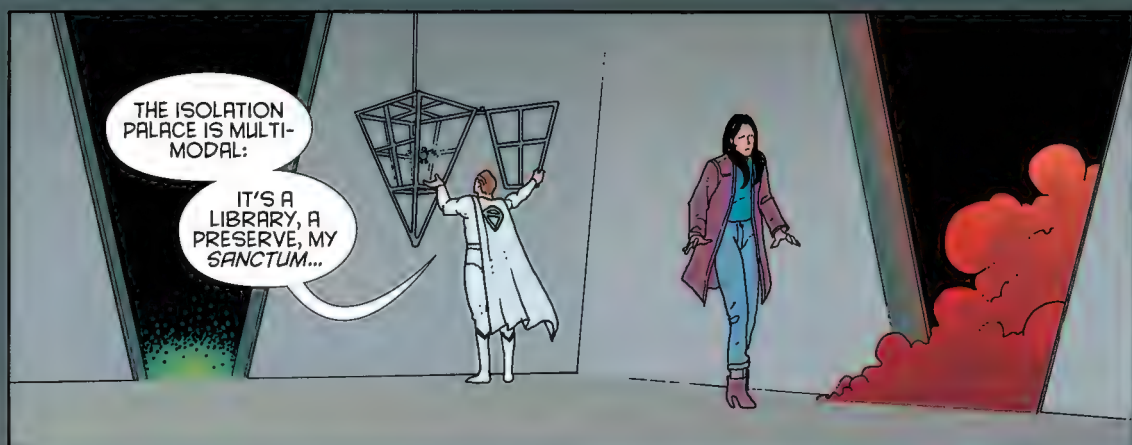
THEY'RE...
DISGUSTING.

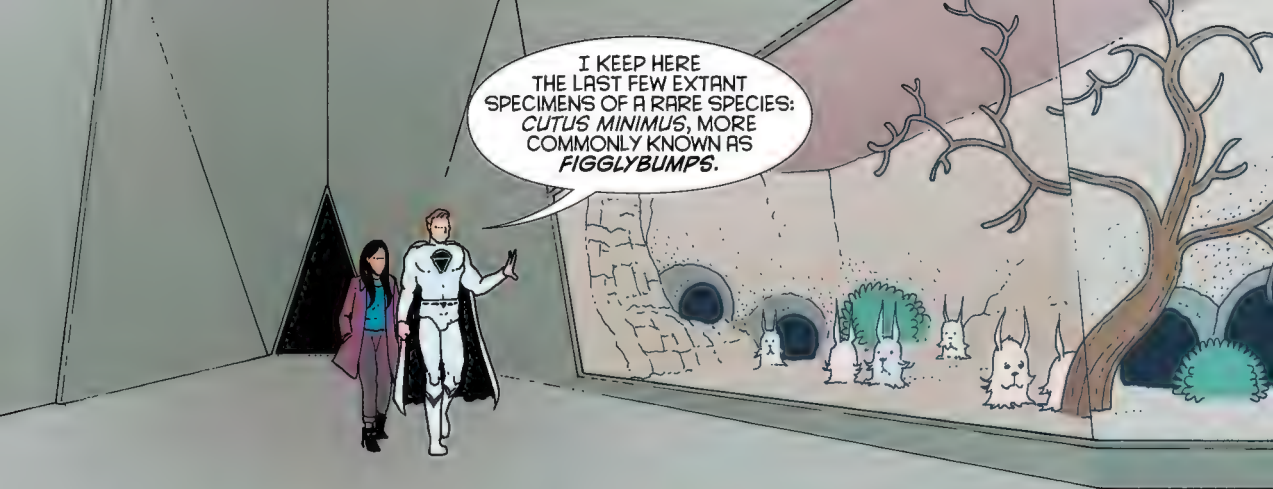
EVERYTHING'S
DISGUSTING ONCE
YOU START TO PAY
ATTENTION.

THERE ARE
MICROSCOPIC
INSECTS CRAWLING
ALL OVER YOUR
SKIN...

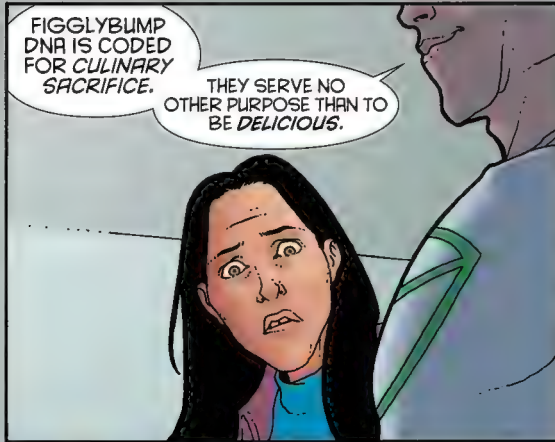


CAREFUL
OR THEY JUST
MIGHT EAT YOU
ALIVE.



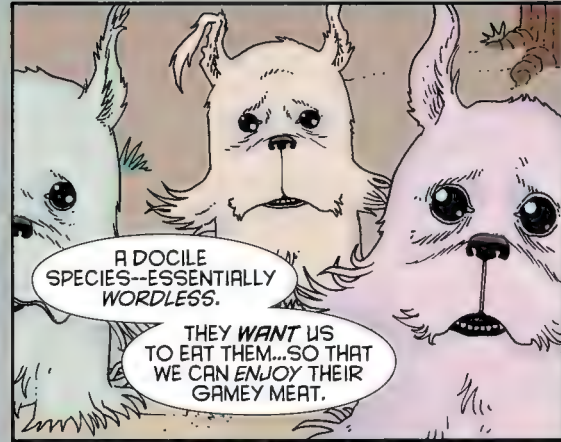


I KEEP HERE
THE LAST FEW EXTANT
SPECIMENS OF A RARE SPECIES:
CUTUS MINIMUS, MORE
COMMONLY KNOWN AS
FIGGLYBUMPS.



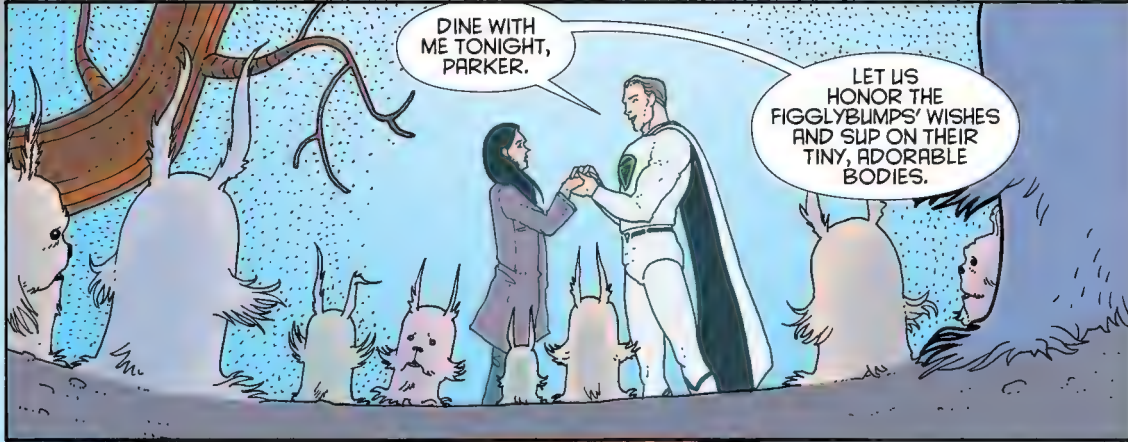
FIGGLYBUMP
DNA IS CODED
FOR CULINARY
SACRIFICE.

THEY SERVE NO
OTHER PURPOSE THAN TO
BE *DELICIOUS*.



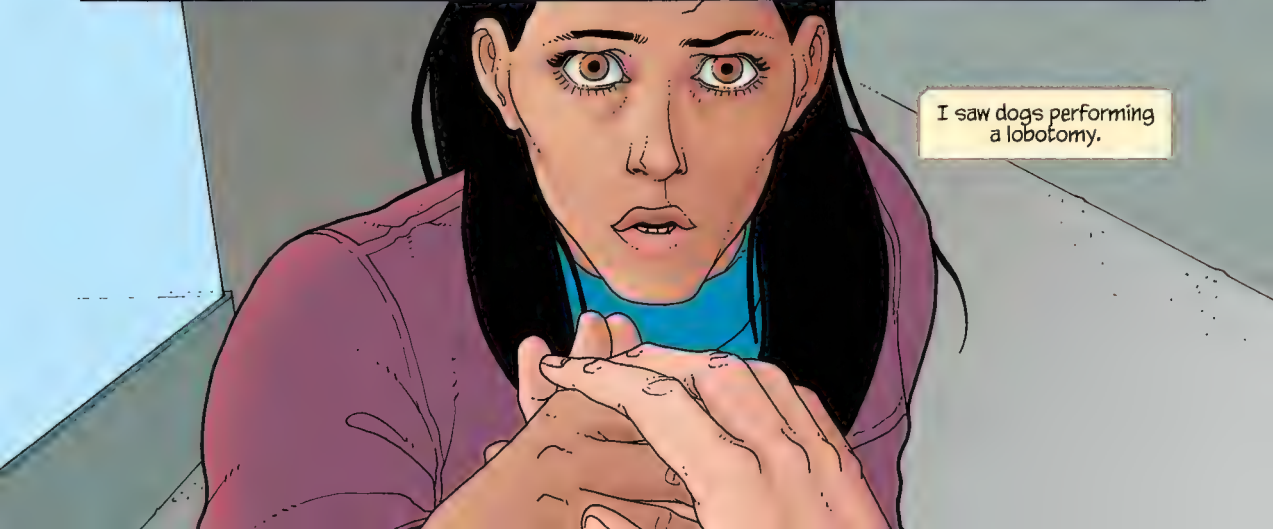
A DOCILE
SPECIES--ESSENTIALLY
WORDLESS.

THEY WANT US
TO EAT THEM...SO THAT
WE CAN ENJOY THEIR
GAMEY MEAT.



DINE WITH
ME TONIGHT,
PARKER.

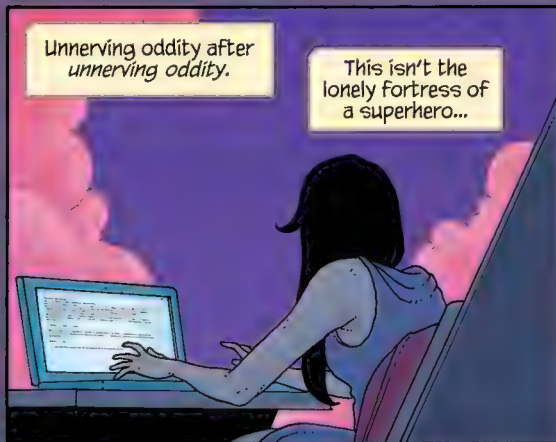
LET US
HONOR THE
FIGGLYBUMPS' WISHES
AND SUP ON THEIR
TINY, ADORABLE
BODIES.



I saw dogs performing
a lobotomy.

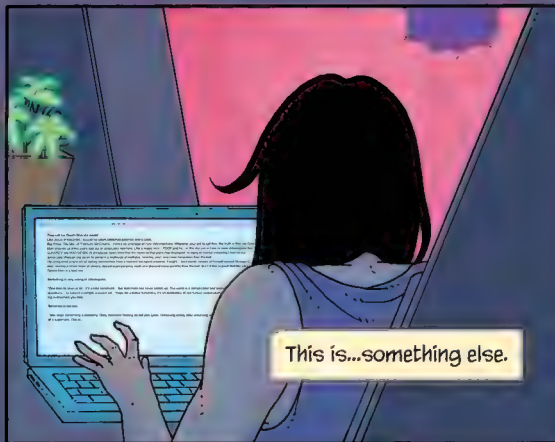


Dairy monsters feeding
on old pop lyrics...

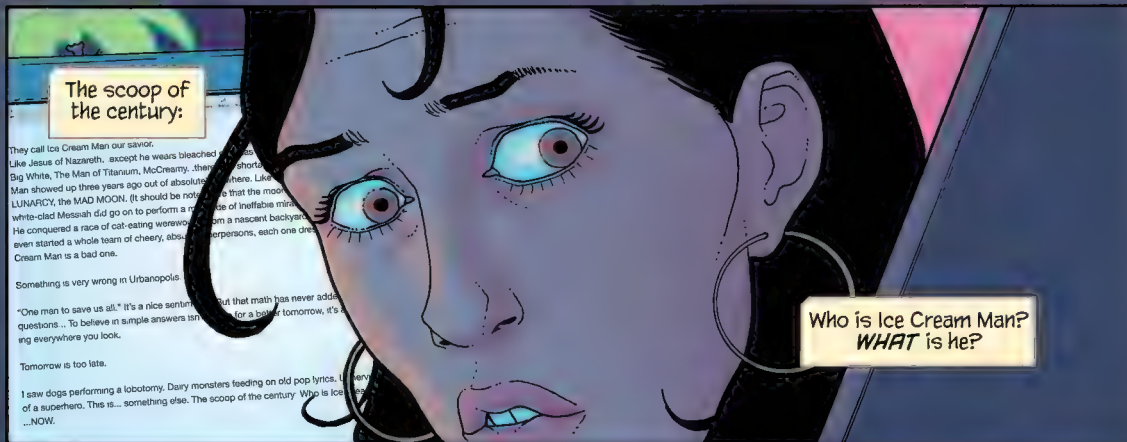


Unnerving oddity after
unnerving oddity.

This isn't the
lonely fortress of
a superhero...



This is...something else.



The scoop of
the century:

They call Ice Cream Man our savior.
Like Jesus of Nazareth, except he wears bleached hair and a white turtleneck.
Big White, The Man of Titanium, McCreamy... there's a shortlist.
Man showed up three years ago out of absolute nowhere. Like a comet.
LUNARCY, the MAD MOON. (It should be noted that this moon is not a celestial body.)
white-clad Messiah did go on to perform a miracle of ineffable magnitude.
He conquered a race of cat-eating werewolves from a nascent backyard.
even started a whole team of cheery, absinthe-sipping persons, each one dressed in a white turtleneck.
Ice Cream Man is a bad one.

Something is very wrong in Urbanopolis.

"One men to save us all." It's a nice sentiment, but that math has never added up.
questions... To behave in simple answers for a better tomorrow, it's a lie.
ing everywhere you look.

Tomorrow is too late.
I saw dogs performing a lobotomy. Dairy monsters feeding on old pop lyrics. Unnerving
of a superhero. This is... something else. The scoop of the century: Who is Ice Cream Man?
...NOW.

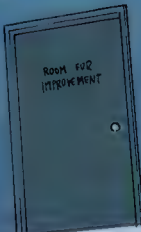
Who is Ice Cream Man?
WHAT is he?



I need answers to tough
questions...**NOW.**



Tomorrow's just too late.



H-HELLO?



WHAT THE DEV--

Miss Paige...



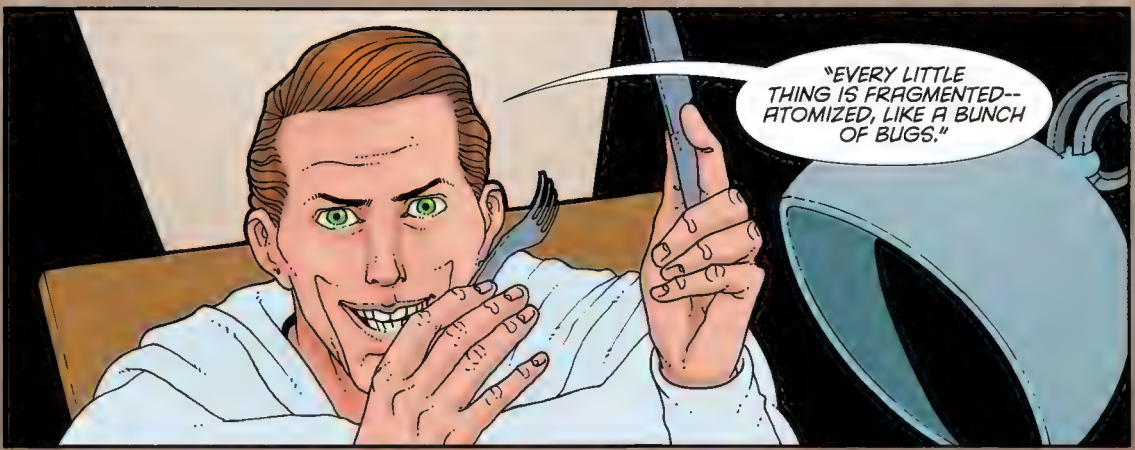
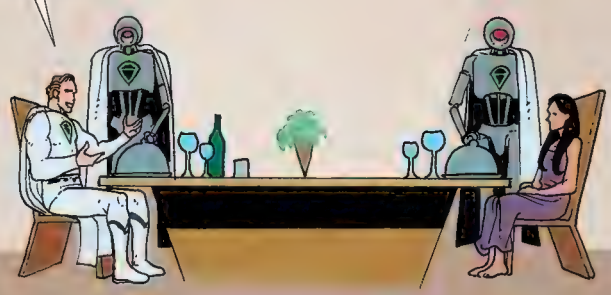
Dinner is served in the main dining hall.

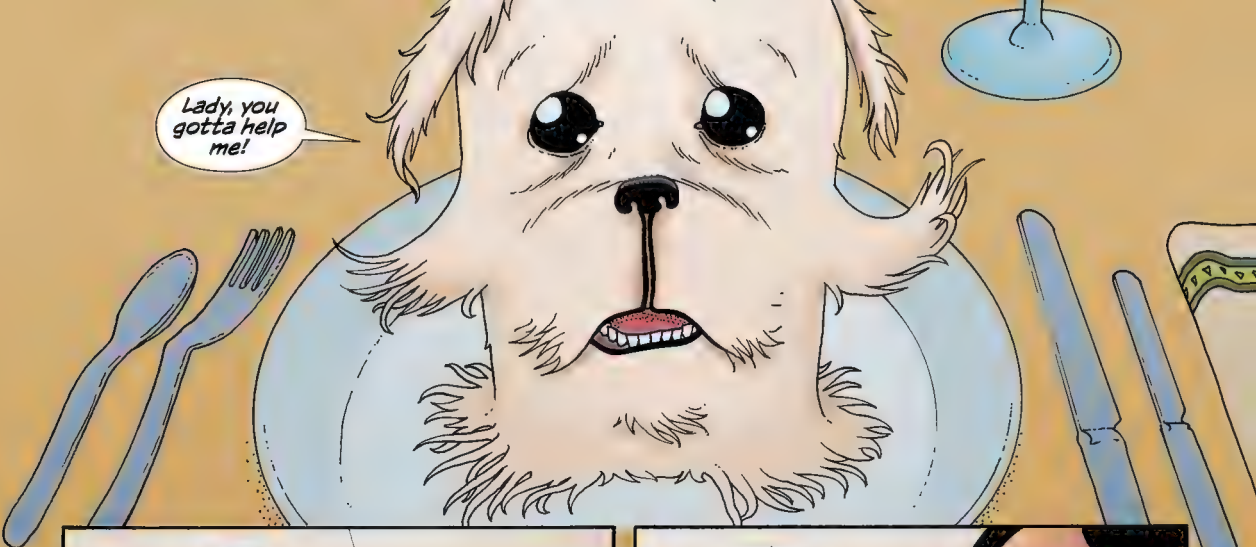
Master is waiting patiently.

MY TRAVELS
ACROSS THE
MANYVERSE HAVE
OPENED MY EYES
TO THE TRUTH,
PARKER.

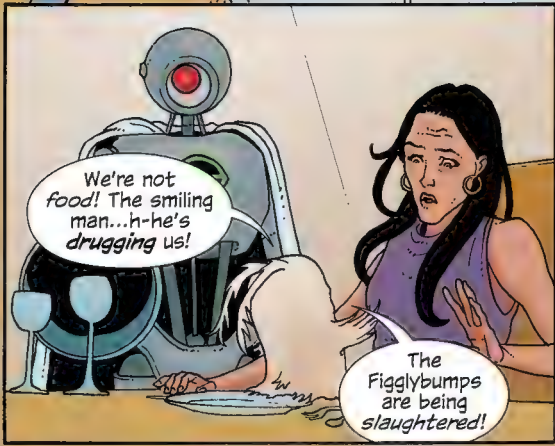
THE *FUNDAMENTAL*
AXIOM HAS PRESENTED
ITSELF TO ME IN THE
FORM OF A *HAIKU*.

I'D LIKE
TO RECITE IT FOR
YOU NOW:



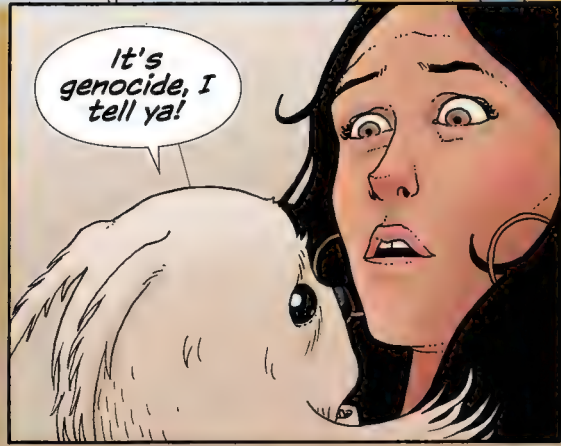


Lady, you gotta help me!

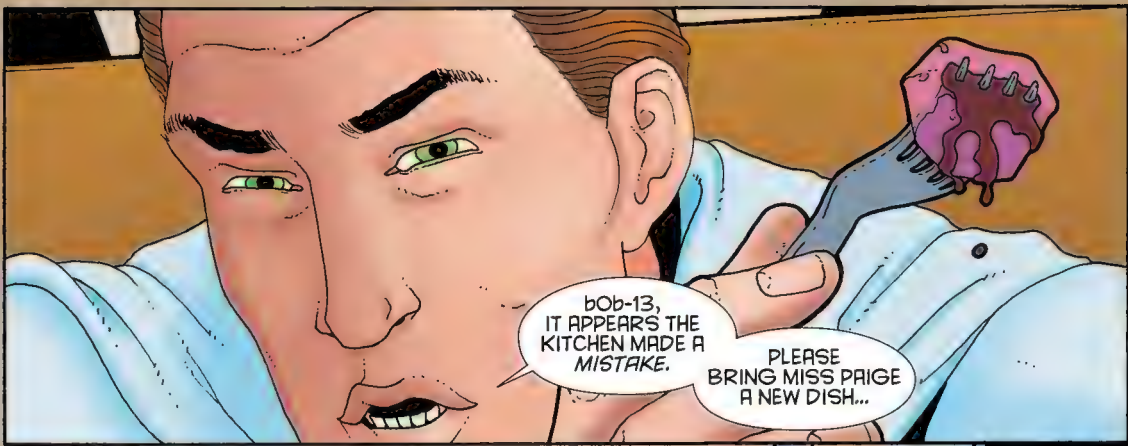


We're not food! The smiling man...h-he's drugging us!

The Figglybumps are being slaughtered!

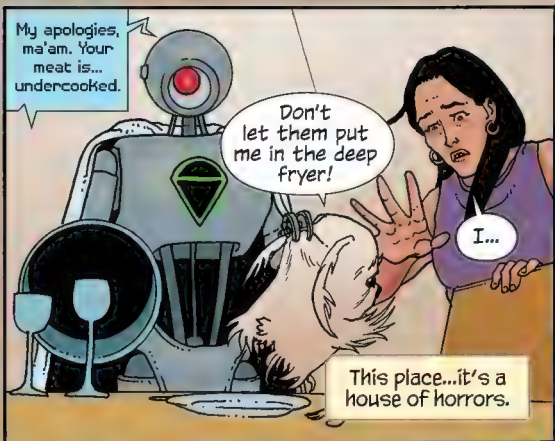


It's genocide, I tell ya!



bob-13, IT APPEARS THE KITCHEN MADE A MISTAKE.

PLEASE BRING MISS PAIGE A NEW DISH...



My apologies, ma'am. Your meat is... undercooked.

Don't let them put me in the deep fryer!

I...

This place...it's a house of horrors.



PLEASE!

It's a TRAP.

In what are likely the final seconds of my life, I'd like to reiterate:

There's nowhere to go, Parker...

The idea of Ice Cream Man is a *bad* one.

Running is pointless.

Salvation isn't a one-person job...it's on *all* of us.

EVERYTHING IS ONE THING!

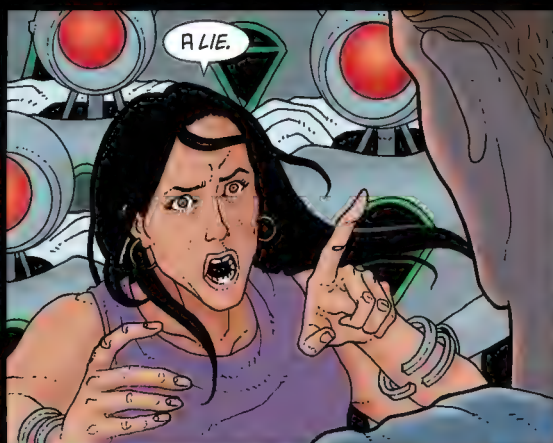
NOT REALLY.

I WAS HOPING TO CONVINCE YOU TO **PROCREATE** WITH ME TONIGHT...

TO BRING INTO WRETCHED EXISTENCE A WHOLE RACE OF DEFORMED, SUPERHUMAN HORRORS.

SHAME...

ONE DAY THE WORLD'S GONNA WAKE UP AND SEE WHAT YOU REALLY ARE:

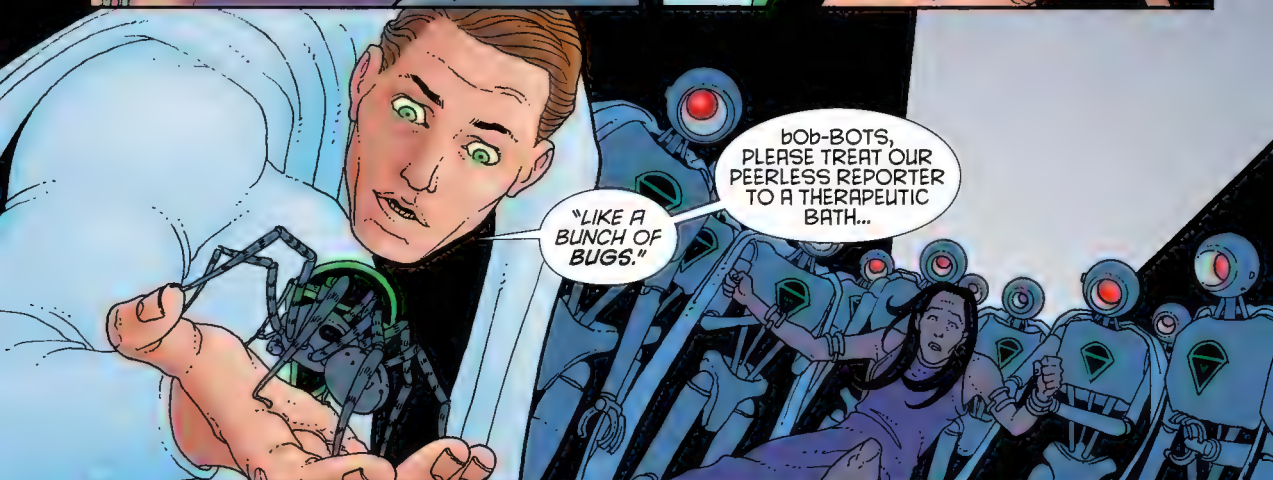


A LIE.



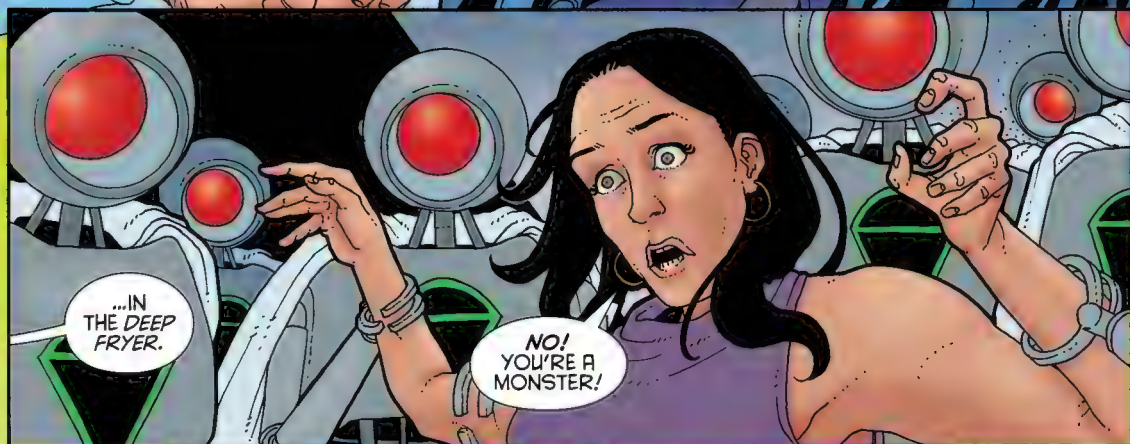
THE WORLD IS
PREDICATED ON
LIES, PULLED APART
BY THEM.

"EVERY
LITTLE THING IS
FRAGMENTED--
ATOMIZED..."



"LIKE A
BUNCH OF
BUGS."

bob-BOTS,
PLEASE TREAT OUR
PEERLESS REPORTER
TO A THERAPEUTIC
BATH...

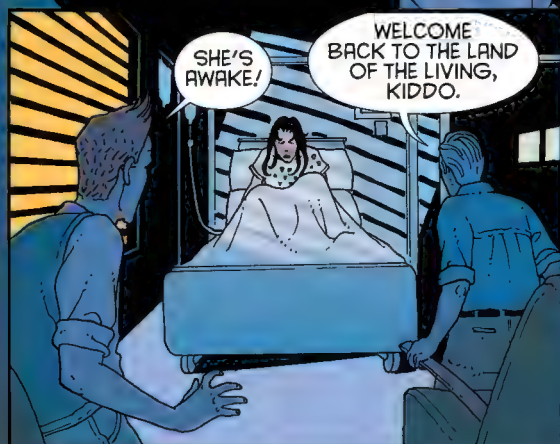
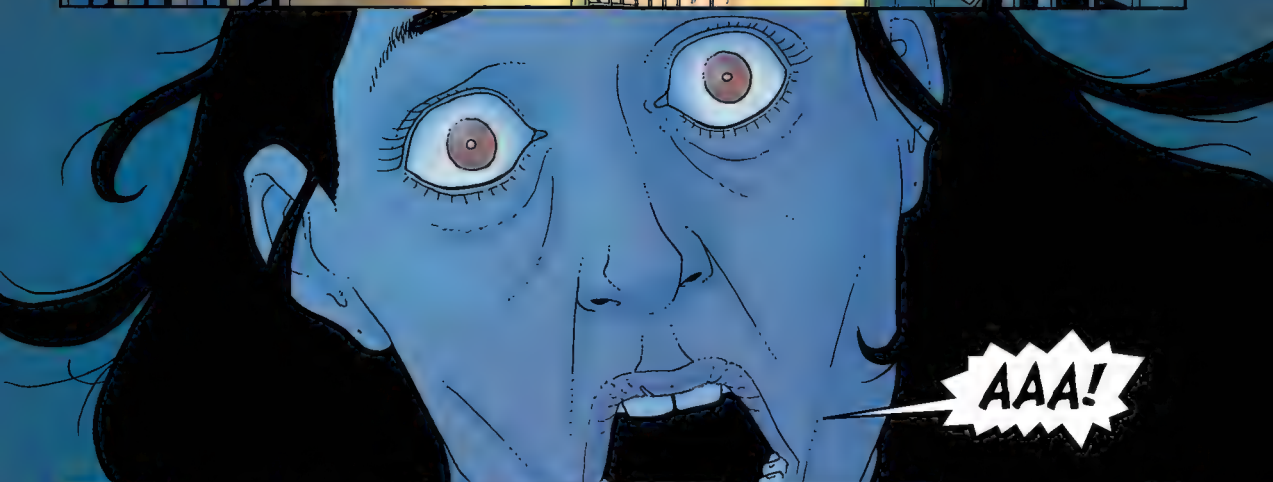
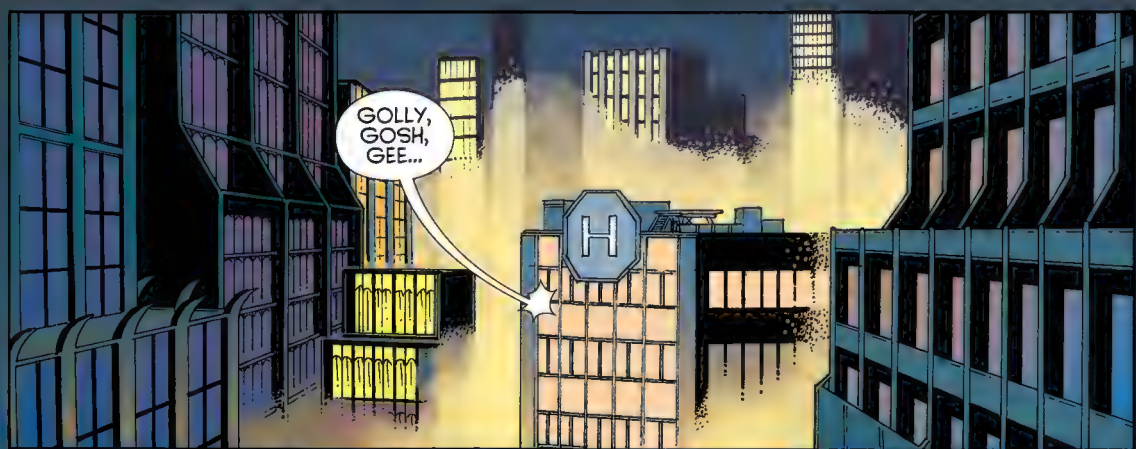


...IN
THE DEEP
FRYER.

NO!
YOU'RE A
MONSTER!



YOU'RE
A--





THREE YEARS? BUT THAT--

WAIT.

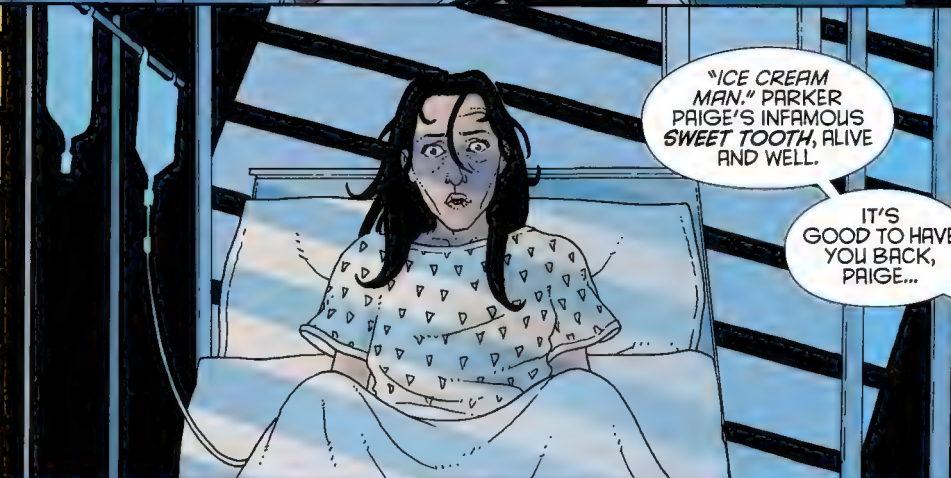


WHERE'S ICE CREAM MAN?



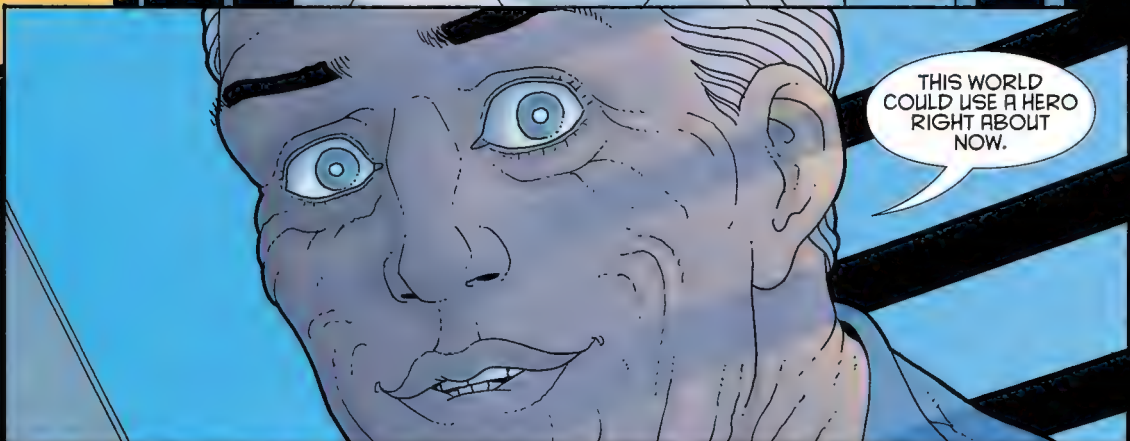
YOU HEAR THAT, TIMMY? GET HER SOME OF THAT LEMON SORBET IN A CUP, WILL YA?

IN A JIFFY, MISS PAIGE! LICKETY SPLIT!



"ICE CREAM MAN." PARKER PAIGE'S INFAMOUS SWEET TOOTH, ALIVE AND WELL.

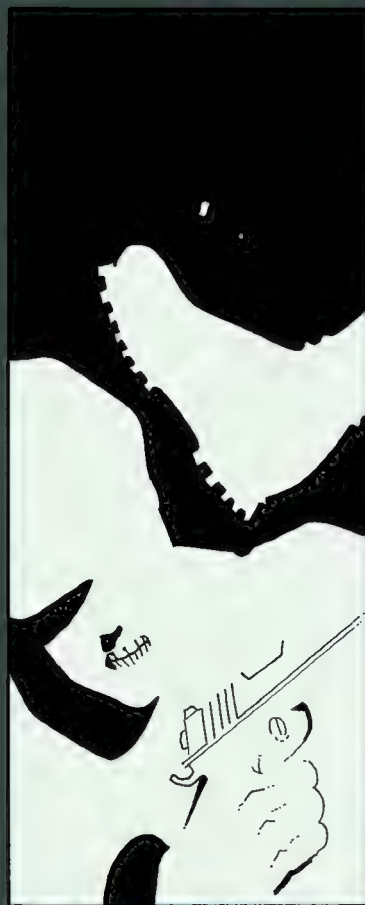
IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU BACK, PAIGE...



THIS WORLD COULD USE A HERO RIGHT ABOUT NOW.

EPILOGUE



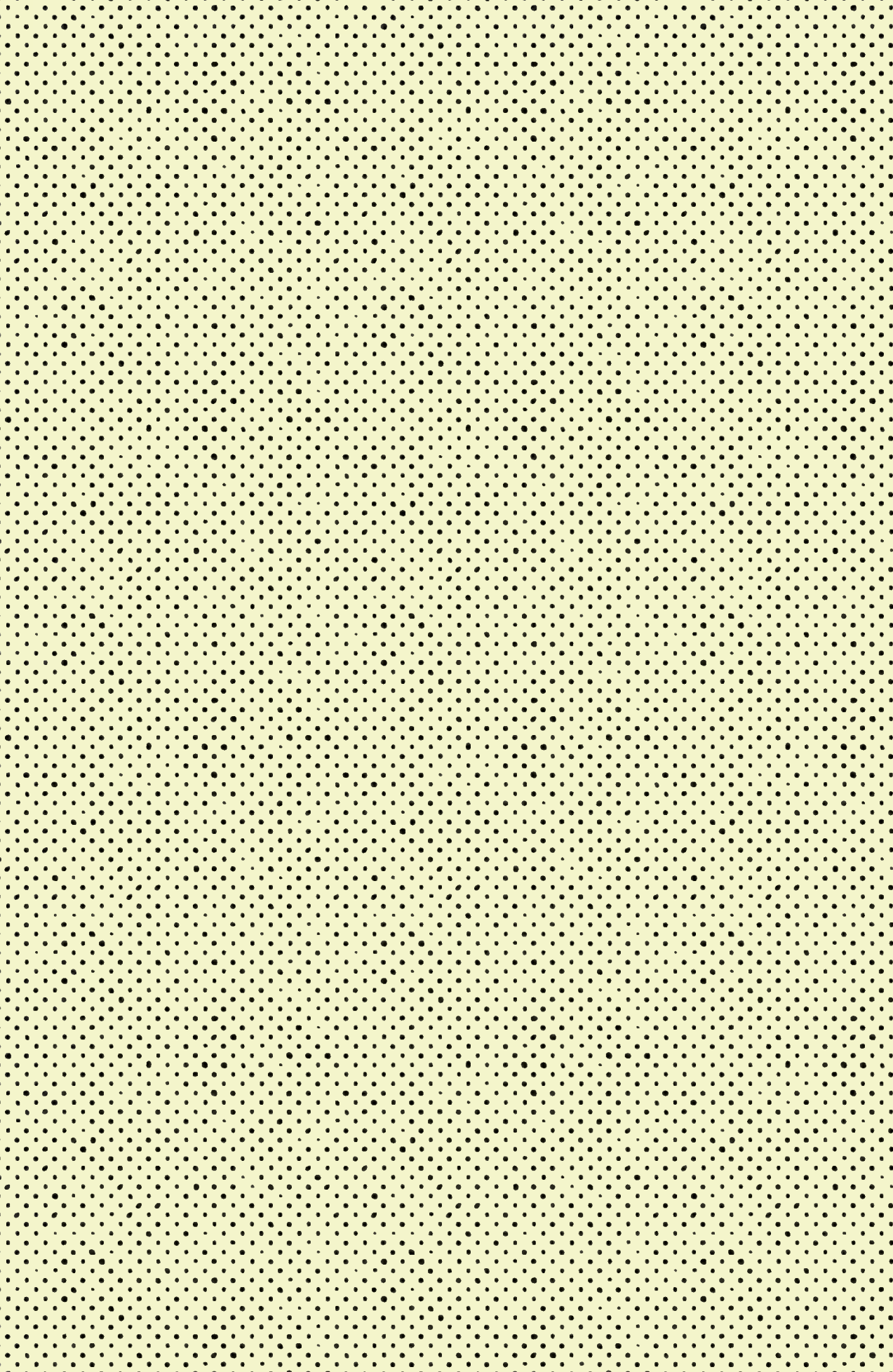




I'M--

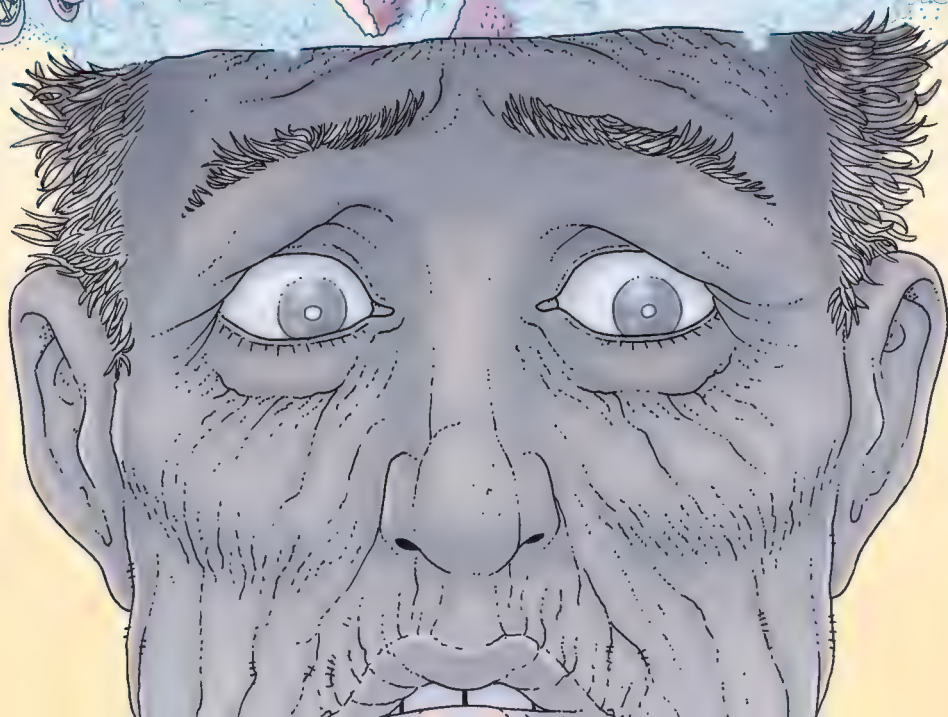
A **Bad Idea**?
Or Just the Thing to
Jolt This Story Alive?
Find Out **Never** in
the Pages of

**CONFECTIVE
COMICS #1**



Watch as it all Recedes

Chapter Eighteen

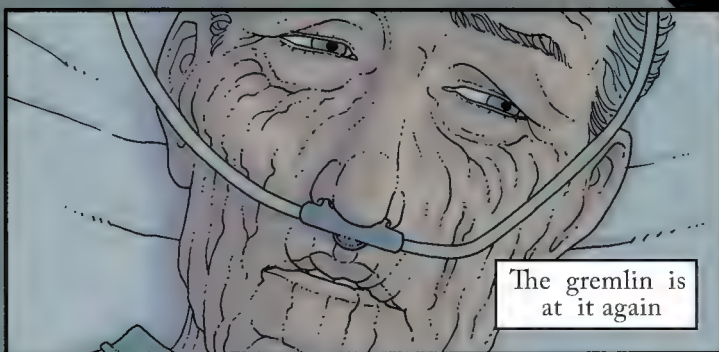




The gremlin am

The gremlin *is* at it agon

again



The gremlin is
at it again

He's stealing mine

Morning,
George.

Medicine
time.

Stealing my memories

I've got
some good
news:

Your son
called.

Gone they are
gone they...

go.
They're going
and

He's
coming to
see you.

gone.

Re memeber
now...

large sycamore
(dogwood? oak?)

I am

was three or,
though

Maybe *two*
years old?

Mom/Dad lay out
blank_____

Blanket. Mom
and Dad lay out
blanket

Sister?
(cousin? friend?)

and Anne who is



Anne who is
[blank] reads book
under tree and
everyone is



Happy

Early memory
(earliest?)

But wait there **he**
is now...



Little Gremlin



He's come to take
this memory away

from me



He's *taking* it. It's

gone.



"How you doing,
Pop? You hanging in
there?"

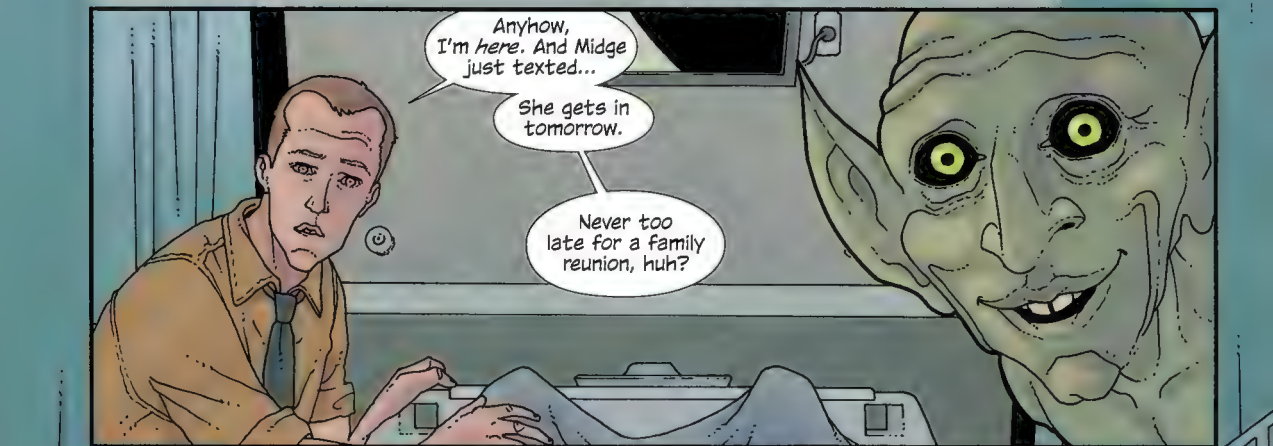


I'm, uh,
sorry it took so
long for me to get
out here.

Me and
Jen have been
having some...
problems.



I guess
she's talking
to a divorce
lawyer...



Anyhow,
I'm here. And Midge
just texted...

She gets in
tomorrow.

Never too
late for a family
reunion, huh?

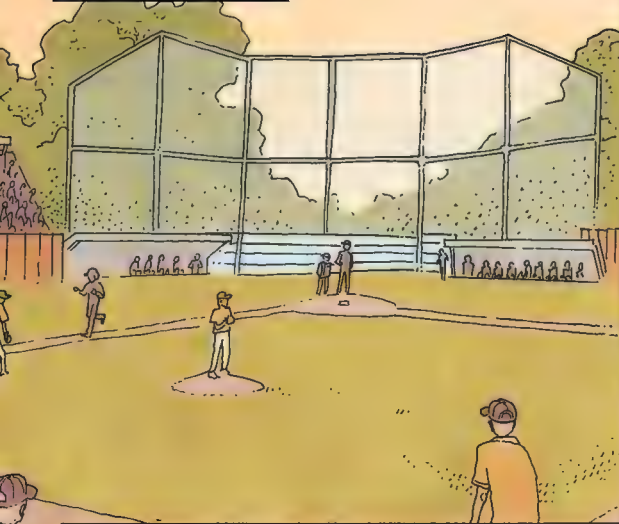


Blink if
you're comfortable,
Pop.

Later memory,
am ten years old.

See it so clear:
Base, ball,
dime, and

Diamond.
Baseball diamond.



peewee league with
I...*me* up to bat



Bobby K pitch Pitching



Field, grass
dappled with
sons



dappled with
sun.

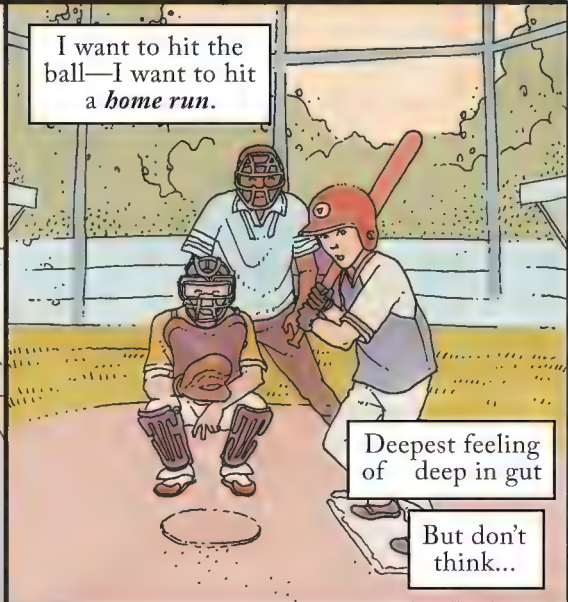
Sweet, light breath
of sun/sons



I want to hit the
ball—I want to hit
a *home run.*

Deepest feeling
of deep in gut

But don't
think...



I don't think
that I ever
did do that

WHOOSH!

Was always
told:

YOU'RE
OUT!

the Little Man is
on the field now

taking like he's
been taking

Stealing second
base...and *the second*
baseman.

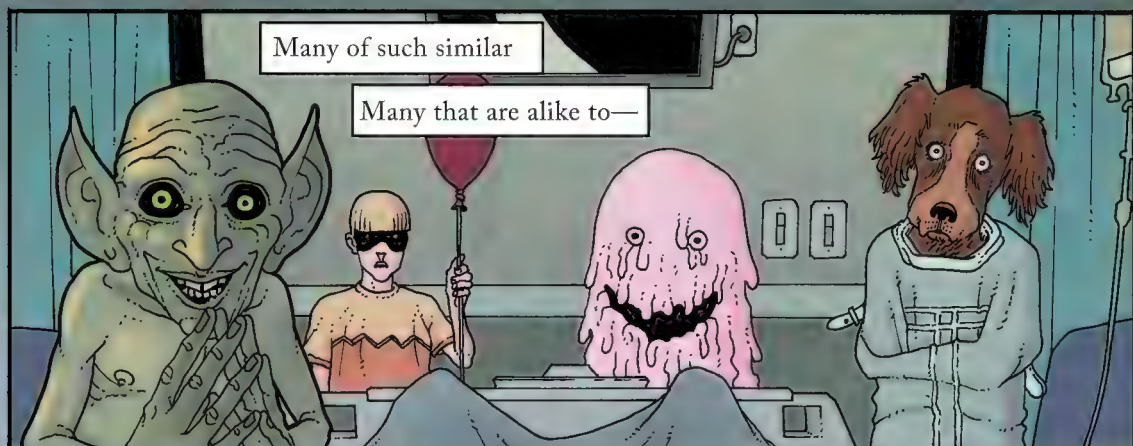
Goodbye, Bobby K

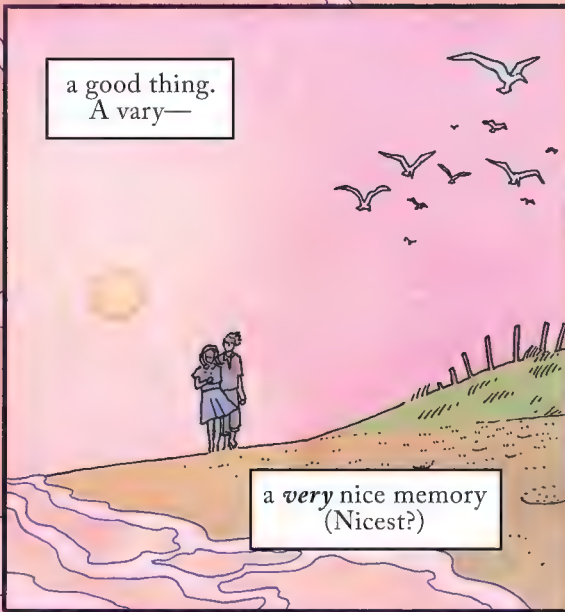
Goodbye, too:
umpire

Goodbye, sweet
light breath of

"Hi, Daddy..."







a good thing.
A vary—

a *very* nice memory
(Nicest?)

Cara and my self:
young.

Young love young
lovers of



each-other/
one-another



We walk like—

we *glide* across it

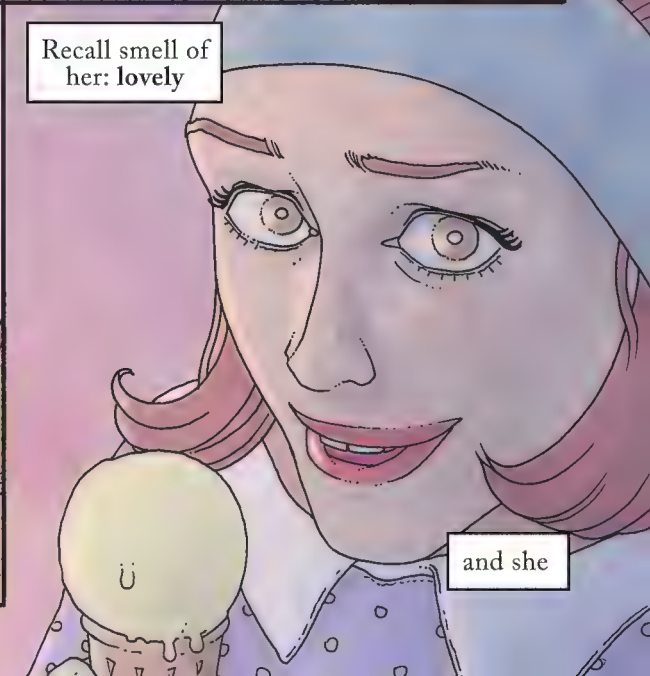
The beach. The Sand
and the Water

Eating and
sharing a?



an *Ice Cream*
Cone.

Recall smell of
her: lovely



and she

ran. From me.

Catch
me if you
can!

I run to—

I run, too.
After her

No words can do

Cannot
describe how

Happy I was

No. Please don't
Not this one Please

It is my favorite One It is

taken

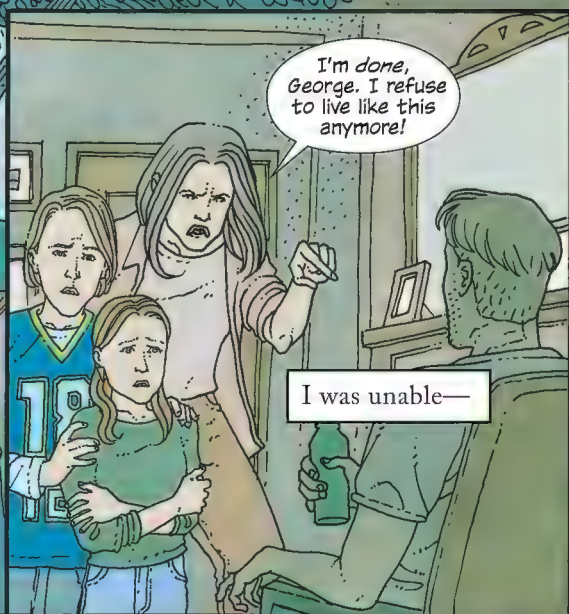
All is being
taken

Has been took



Later: Cara and I

we could not—



I'm done, George. I refuse to live like this anymore!

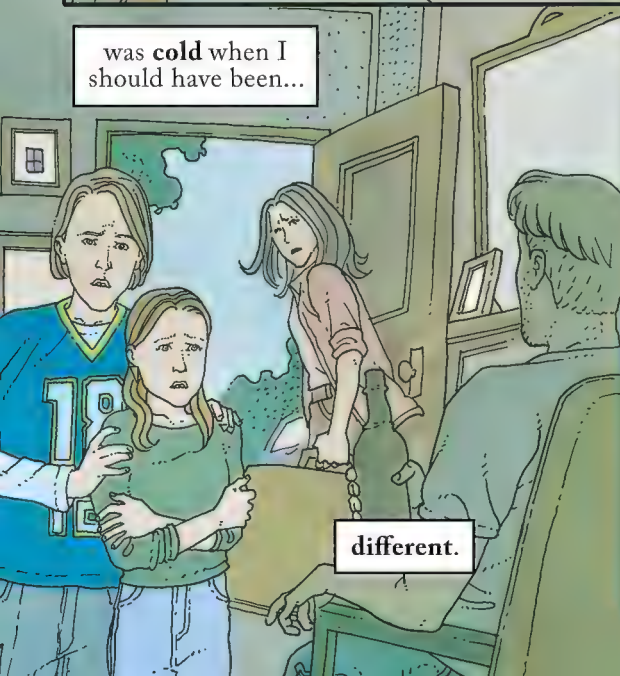
I was unable—



did not love like—



Did not love like one should.



was **cold** when I should have been...

different.



Why, back then, did I not—

Do we have to leave?

Daddy?

did/could not love like I
should have Loved

Nothing
lasts forever.
Remember
that.

Why? So mean/cold

when all I wanted
was to be

I hope you're
happy.

Happy.

I...

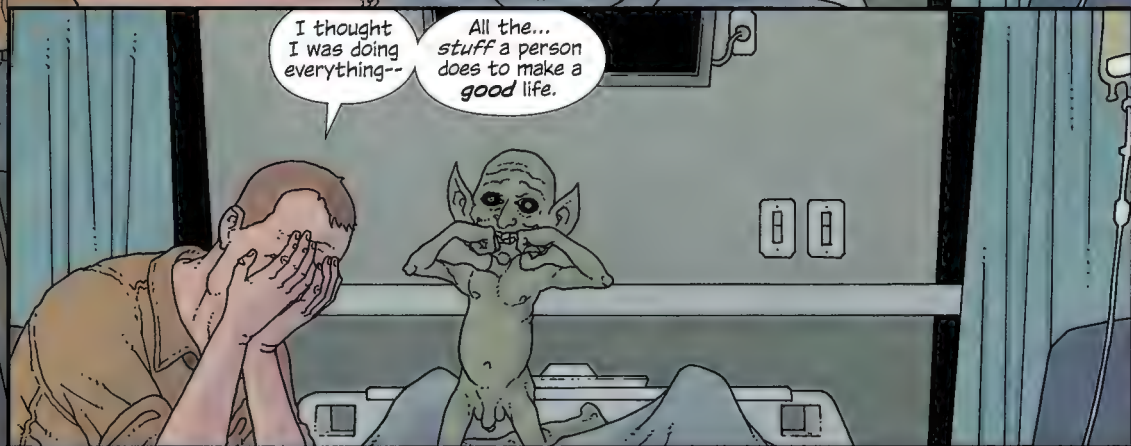
have never been

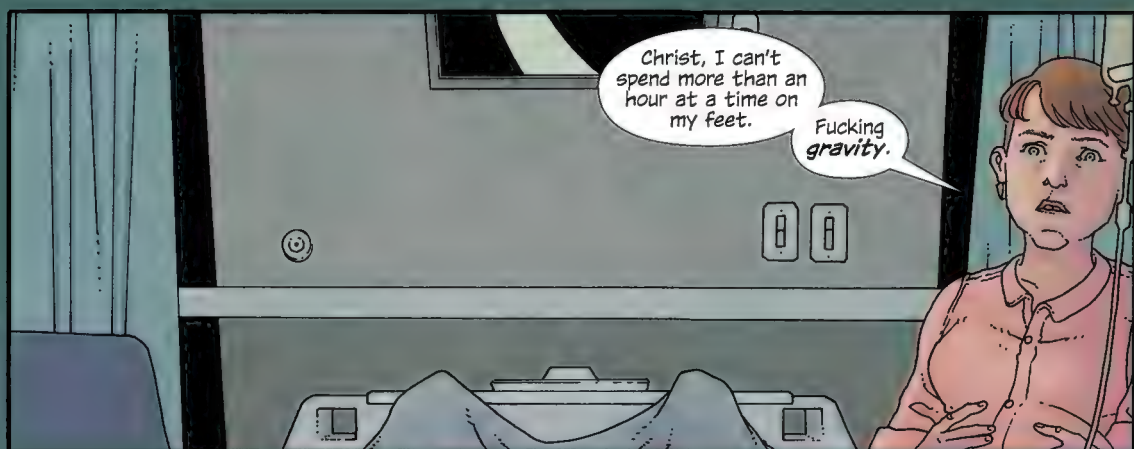
was never again:

Happy.

She **ran** from me.

"Jen's gonna take
the kids..."





except all That are taken
like this One will be.

This is before
Cara left

Before days of dark,
days of: **alone**

remember: [car]
Re member smell of:
Desert Road

Entire all of
whom I—

family trip with **Everyone**

Cara driving
(or though?)

Cara in next seat
while I do—

while I am
the one who

drives.

back seat it is There are

my **children.**

John who is Very same
to much similar as

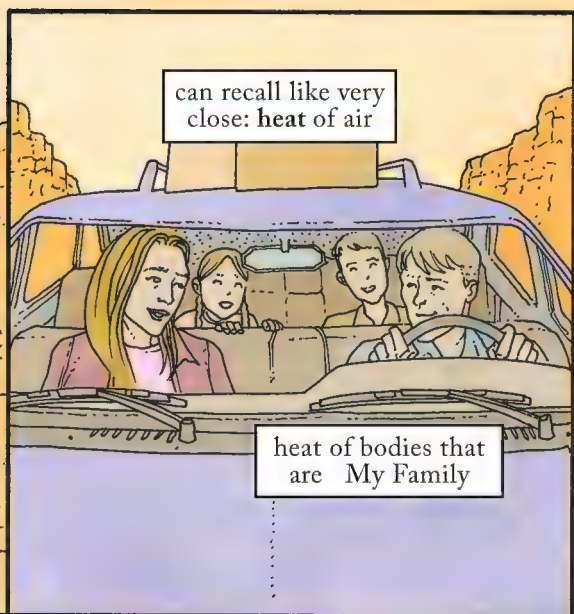
Margaret/Midge.
Sweeter than
[name of flower]

his father.



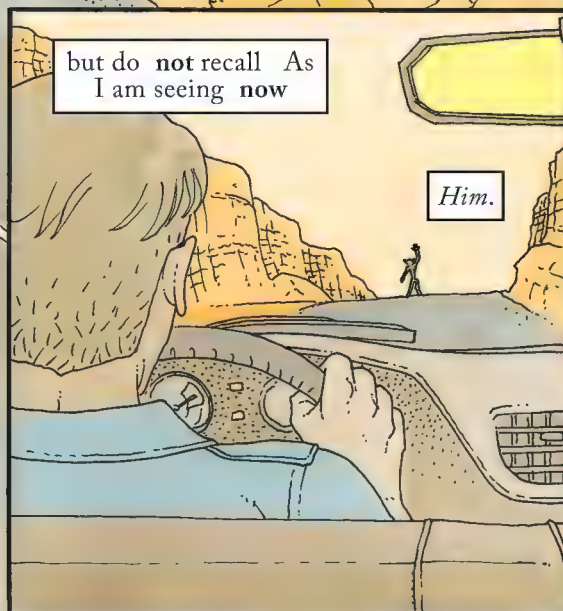
We are going to
the **Grand Canyon**.
I know that

we are going there
in this **Memory**.



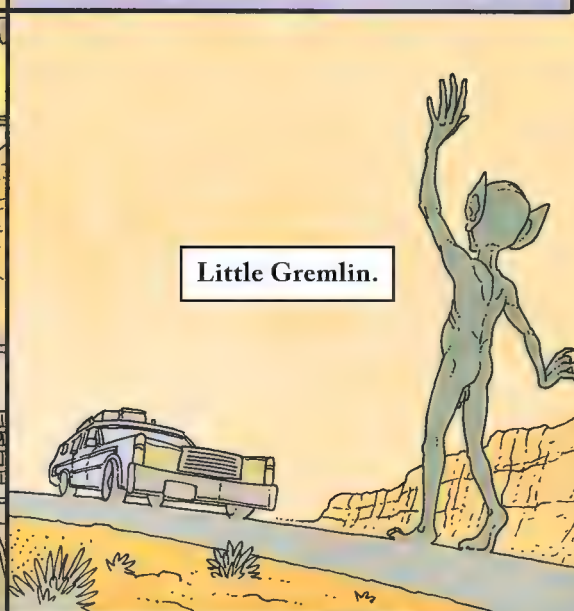
can recall like very
close: **heat of air**

heat of bodies that
are **My Family**



but do **not** recall As
I am seeing **now**

Him.



Little Gremlin.



No...

I do not like
seeing **Him**.



"I hate seeing him
like this..."



Just so...
helpless.

The
lighting in these
places....

It's no
wonder so many
people wind up
dying.



You okay,
Johnny? You don't
seem super
great.

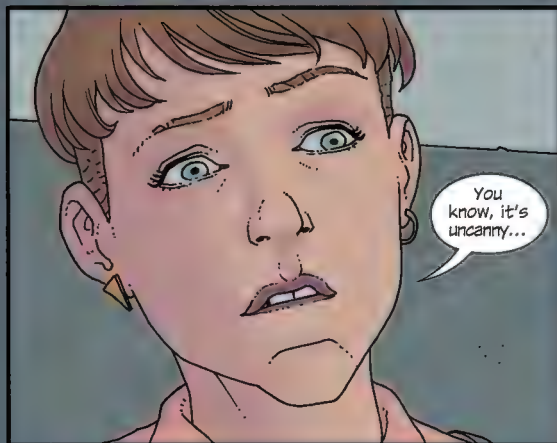


My marriage
is disintegrating, and
my dad--with whom I
have *major* unresolved
abandonment issues--is a
lifeless vegetable with one
foot in the fucking
grave.



I'm *peachy*,
Midge.

Thanks for
asking.

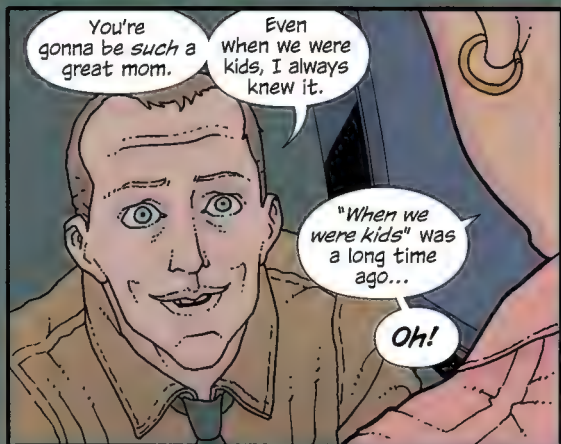


You
know, it's
uncanny...



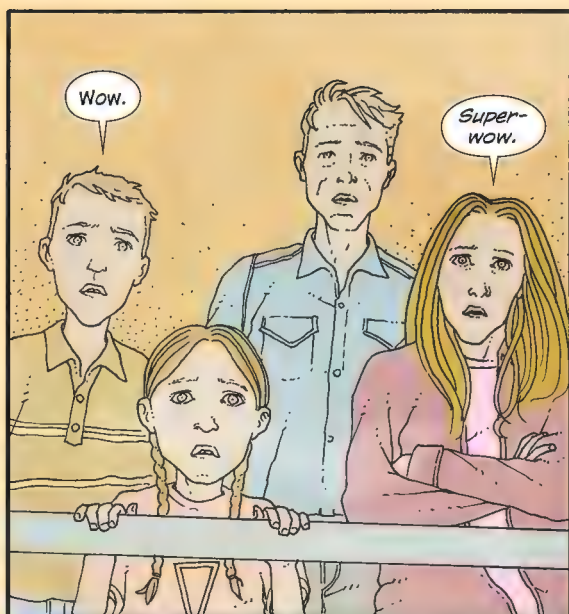
I...

...you sound
just like him
sometimes.



how *Grand* it was





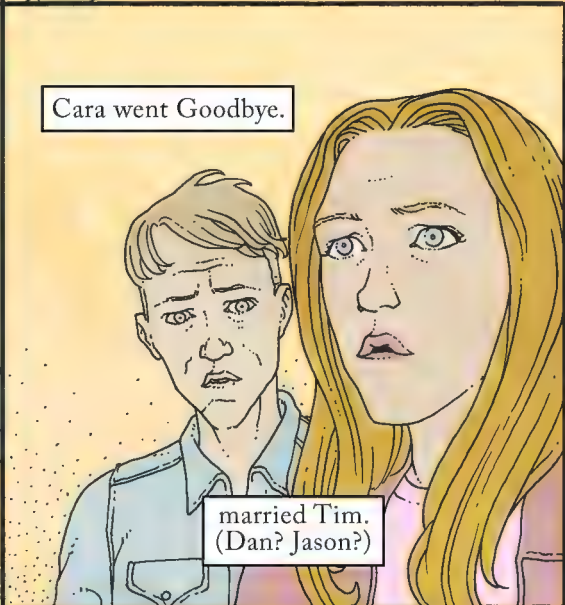
everything does
get taken

in the End.



everything goes: Goodbye.

Cara went Goodbye.



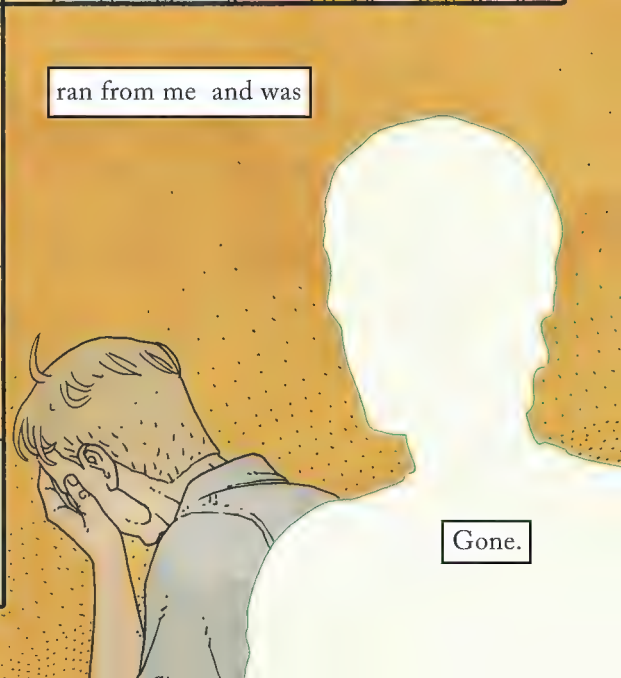
married Tim.
(Dan? Jason?)

then got sick with

did Die of [blank]



ran from me and was

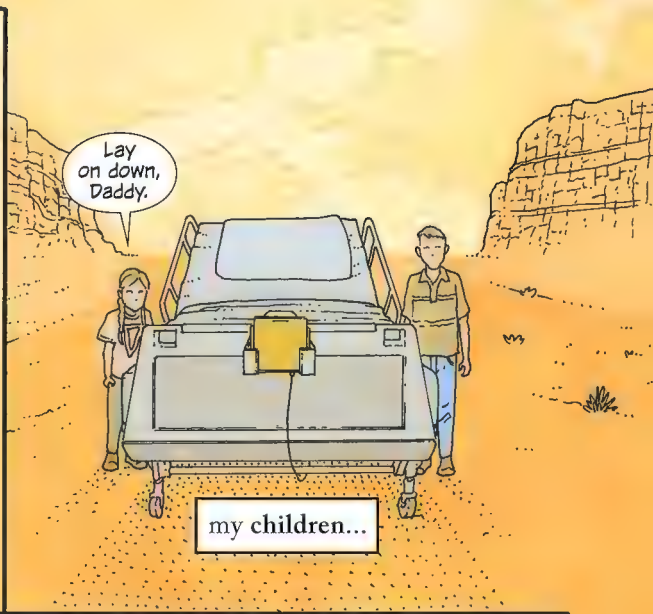


Gone.



wish I could have
been Different.

Come on,
Pop.



Lay
on down,
Daddy.

my children...



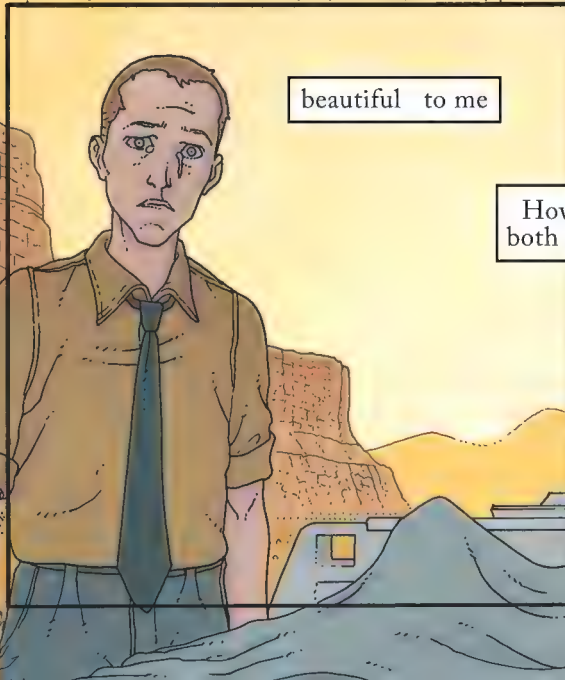
grown. And did
turn—

have become



Complicated People.

but also are
(will always be)
So



beautiful to me

How *beautiful*,
both my children.



It's
time.



Let go,
Dad.

do wish very

deeply that they
can know—

can find a way to
be



Happy.

Oh! Just realized
I not—



No longer can
recall who I

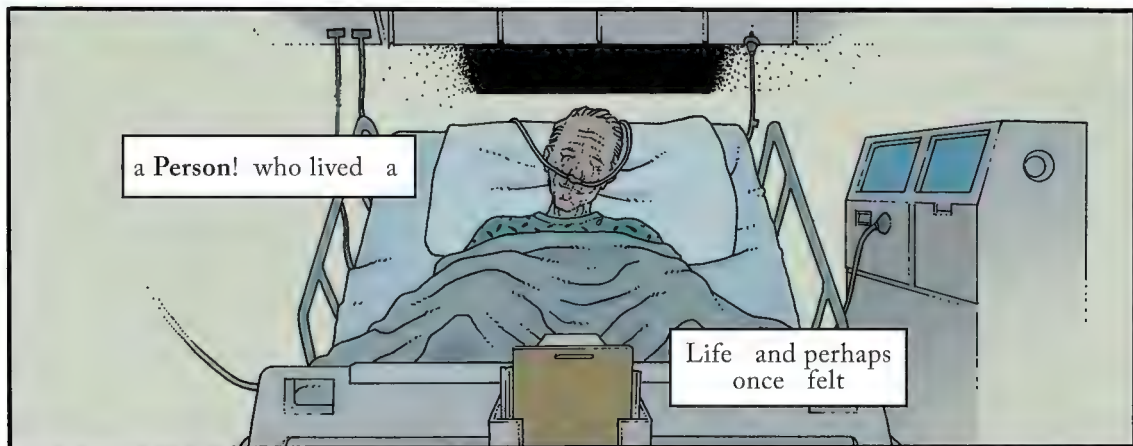


am or

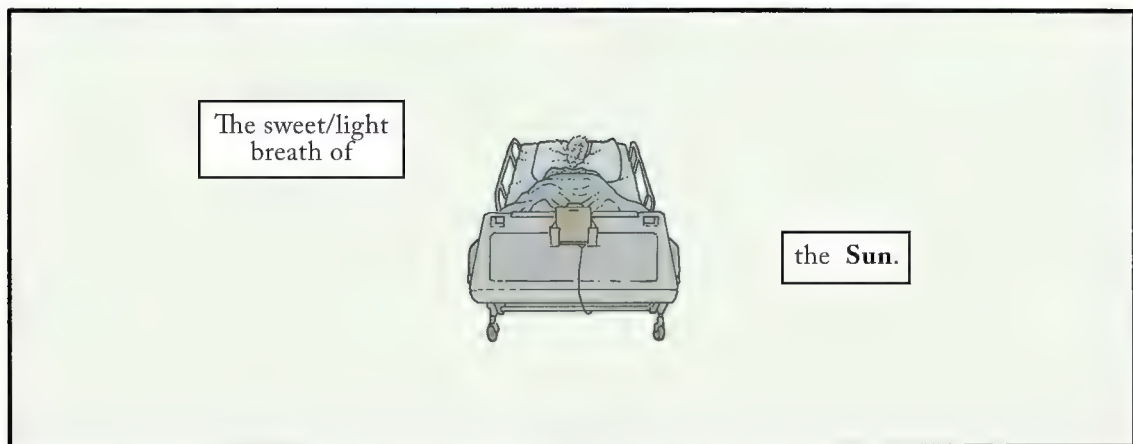
was.



I *was*



Life and perhaps
once felt



the **Sun.**

how lucky, me

to have *been.*

ICE CREAM MAN™

HAUNTING FOR BEGINNERS

"HOW TO BE A TRUE-BLUE APPARITION"

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 01. One Pair of Kitchen Scissors | 03. A Sense of Your Own Insignificance |
| 02. One Clean White Bedsheet | 04. The Propensity to Quietly Wander |

SIMPLE INSTRUCTIONS:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| Step 1:
DON YOUR SUIT | Step 2:
ROAM INVISIBLY | Step 3:
OBSERVE THE LIVING |
|--|---|---|



Cut holes for your peepers. Place linen sheet over your head and assume a ghostly aspect. Try your hand at some low-level moans or otherworldly lamentations. Do NOT remove your garment in the presence of the living, lest the spell of invisibility be broken and your extant self exposed. Understand: you are dead.



As if floating, plod lightly across the expanse of your home, your town, your city. Keep your footfalls light and ethereal. Do NOT try to phase through solid objects (e.g., walls, floors, ceilings, old rocking chairs, kitchen tables, other persons). Remember: you are a ghost and ghosts are not seen or heard—until they wish to be.



Now you're ready to watch the sad show. Take note of how forlorn people are. See the woman crying to herself on the cellar stairs. Witness the man apart from his family. Know this: people are suffering, everywhere and in every way. The living are no more alive than you are. (You are a ghost you are a ghost you are a ghost.)

NOTABLE RESTLESS SPIRITS:

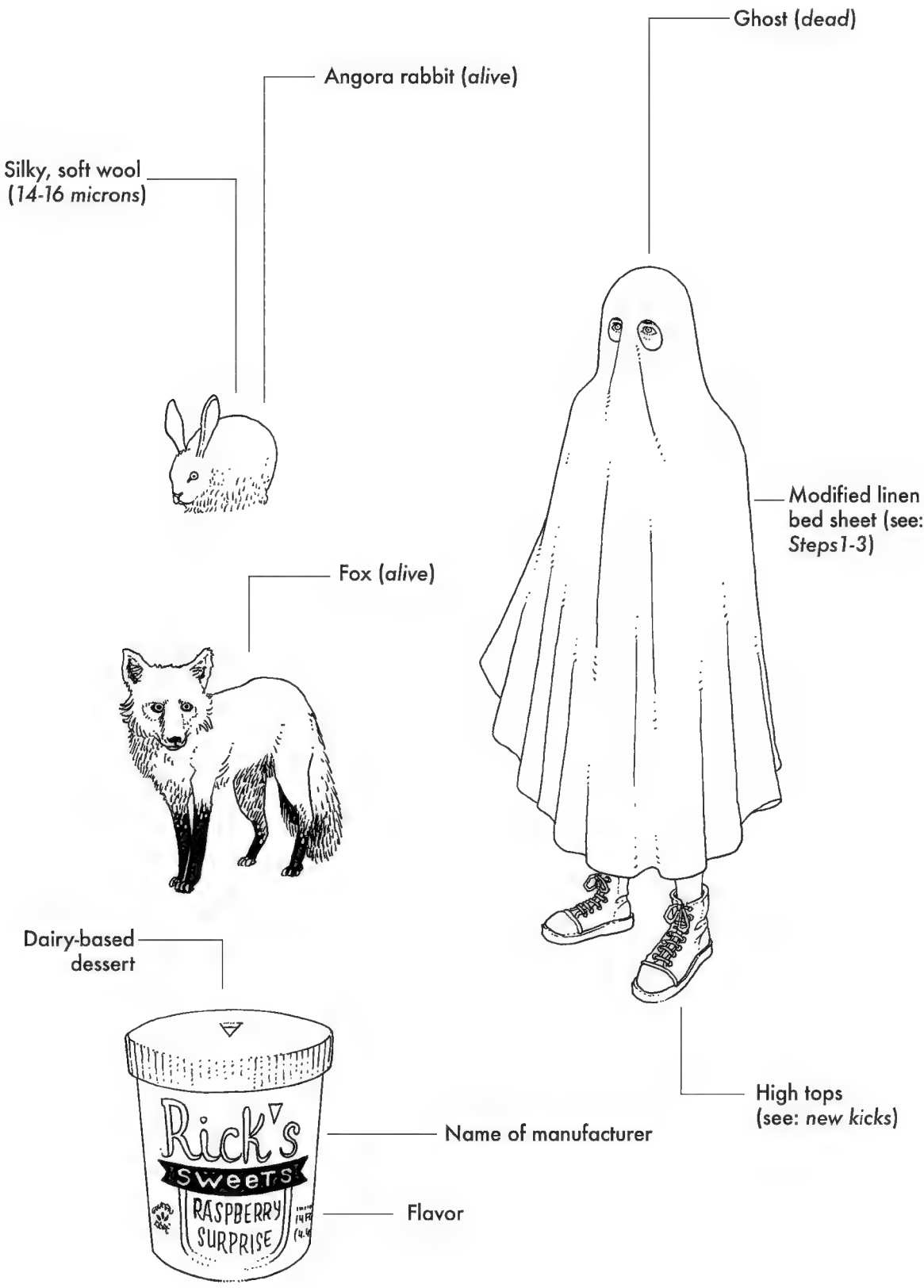
W. Maxwell Prince, who haunts dialectically; Martin Morazzo, who haunts via delineations; Chris O'Halloran, who haunts in colour; Good Old Neon, who haunts in absentia



THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR
CORPOREALITY

"YOU'RE MORE DEAD THAN ALIVE"

Nomenclature (age 9)



Step 4

Hear their voices from downstairs.



Step 5

Hear the television set announce its programming. Note the ambient volume: loud enough to be heard from space.



Step 6

See your parents in repose. Question your shared DNA. Dream of various emancipation scenarios.



Step 7

Glide down the stairs. You are a ghost.



Step 8

Glide across the room. You are a ghost.



Step 9

Pass through the door, completely insubstantial...



Step 10

See your town at sunset. Note the way the day recedes—how it gives birth to a liberating blanket of darkness.



Step 11

Approach the Trabelli home under cover of new night.



Step 12

See, through the window, Mr. and Mrs. Trabelli arguing about Mr. Trabelli's failed business venture. (You are a ghost.)



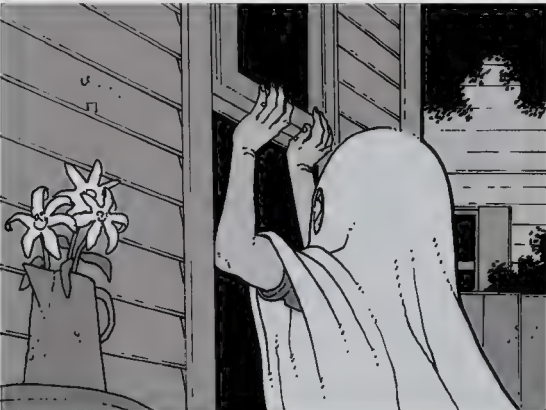
Step 13

Note, as you make your way to the back of the house, that pretty much every Mr. and Mrs. in your town are caught up in some kind of years-long argument about something.



Step 14

Wonder if marriage is ever really worth it. Wonder if your Uncle Pete, whom your mom calls *The Perpetual Bachelor*, might not have the right idea vis-à-vis love.



Step 15

Give Jimmy Trabelli a scare. You are a ghost.



Step 16

See Jimmy awash in Angoras.



Step 17

Invite this living human to join you in the spirit realm as an apparitional sidekick of some kind.



Step 18

Hear of the curse cast upon poor Jimmy by forces beyond all reckoning. Feel sorrow at his apparent misfortune.



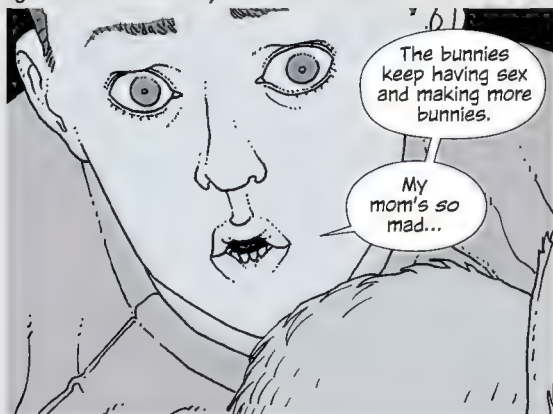
Step 19

Politely decline this earthly offer—you are a ghost, and ghosts have no need for familiars...even if they are kind of fuzzy and adorable...



Step 20

Understand, finally, the meaning of that phrase your dad once used regarding your uncle Pete and his old girlfriend: "I bet they fuck like rabbits."



Step 21

From a purgatorial place, transmit a parting message to this sorry oxygen-breather. You are a ghost.



Step 22

Float through your town, past the convenience stores, past the shuttered video rental place, past the spot where that one high school kid crashed his car into a bus.



Step 24

See the dead fox by the tracks.



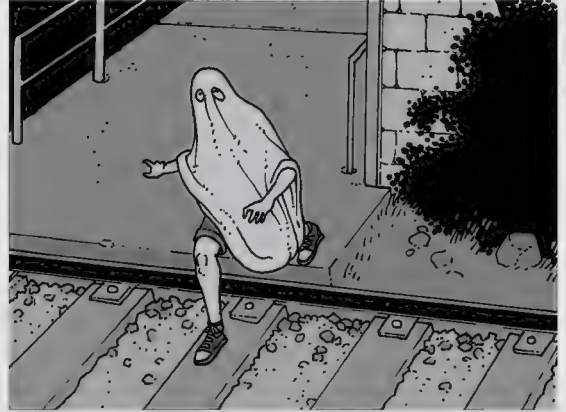
Step 26

Make your way to that spot under the pedestrian bridge you've always liked—the one at the edge of the long tunnel, where the feral cats hunt for food scraps.



Step 23

Advance—non-corporeal and totally *diaphanous*—over the train tracks, despite explicit instruction from your mother to never, ever do so.



Step 25

Disregard that sick feeling in your stomach. You are a ghost, untethered from sentimental mortal stuff.



Step 27

Haunt at your discretion.



Step 28

Remember, as the animal ignores you: you're completely invisible. Unseen, unheard, unregarded. *Alone.*



Step 29

As such, try out the aforementioned lamentations (see: Step 1). Ululate freely.



Step 30

Hear the echo of your spectral noise.



Step 31

See the man aloft. See him, on the ledge, in a posture that's kinda weird.



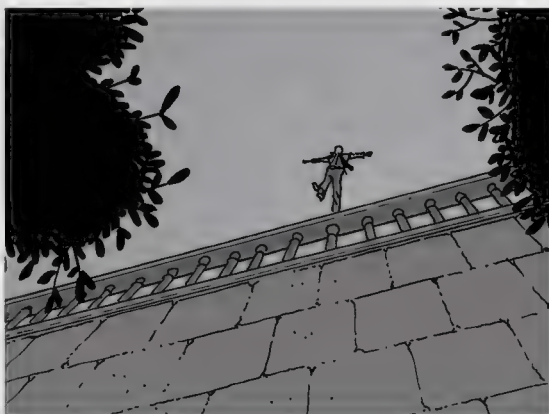
Step 32

Wonder what it is he's doing up there.



Step 33

See the man's shoes lift off. Try to discern the look on his face: fear...or relief?



Step 34

Try in vain to call out to him.



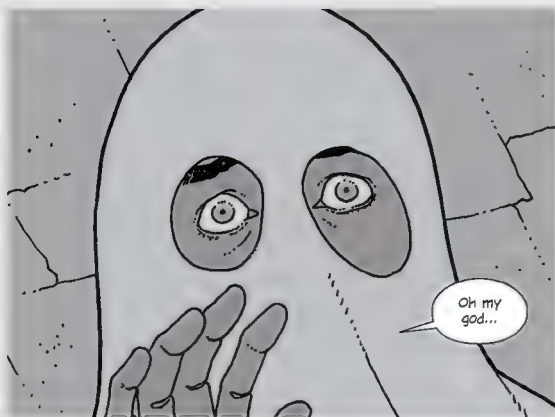
Step 35

Watch the man's body yield to gravity. See him begin to fall.



Step 36

Remember: he can't hear you.



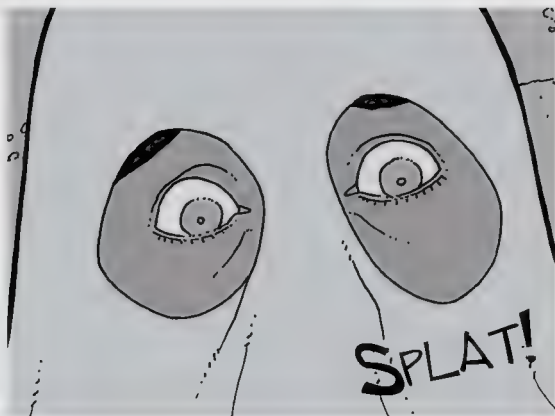
Step 37

Watch him fall. Feel the little hairs on your shoulder stand up as if electrified.



Step 38

Watch and understand that there isn't a single thing you can do. You are a ghost—a non-entity.



Step 39

Hear the thud of bone against concrete. See the man's legs go akimbo. Hear the weird gurgle as blood frees itself from inside his skull.



Step 40

From the spirit-plane, call out to the lifeless figure before you.



Step 41

Hear his response...



Step 42

Deny the truth; refuse, vehemently, to accept what's just happened before your eyes.



Step 43

Beseech the land of the living.



Step 44

Understand: no one can ever hear you.



Step 45

Know: you are a ghost.



Step 46

Try and fail to understand what you've witnessed.



Step 47

Try and fail to erase the sound of the gurgle from your ears.



Step 48

Having regained your corporeality, find comfort in the soft purr of a kitten.



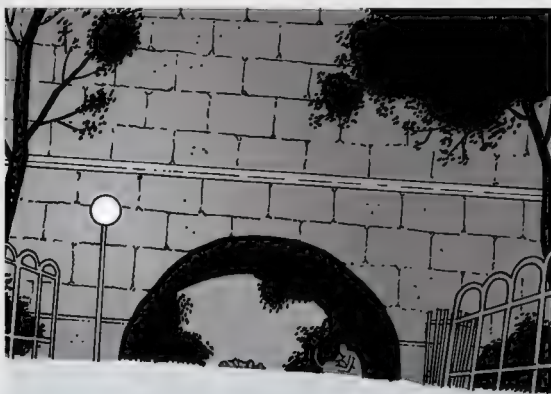
Step 49

Wonder why a person would—as your dad puts it—off themselves.

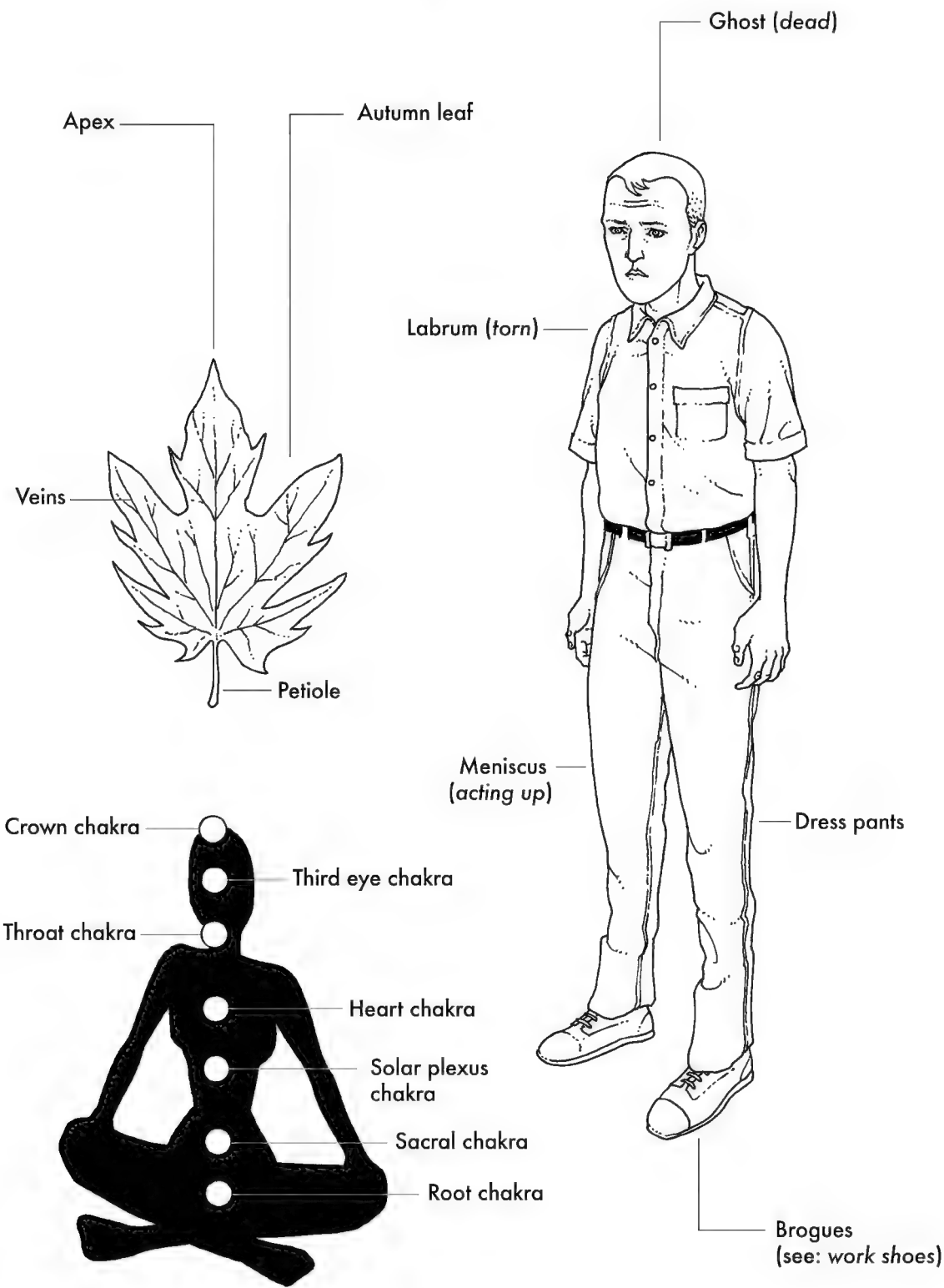


Step 50

Wonder it for thirty years...



Nomenclature (age 39)



Step 1

Mope at your desk, in your cubicle. Mope under the fluorescent lighting of your office.



Step 2

Mope at the copy machine. Mope as one report becomes ten reports, as ten become a hundred.



Step 3

Mope at the water cooler. Mope as Greg tells you about his business idea.



Step 4

Mope at the way certain details of your sorry, sadsack life tend to reflect like light through a prism.



Step 5

Mope through the parking lot, against the autumn wind, all the way to your compact automobile.



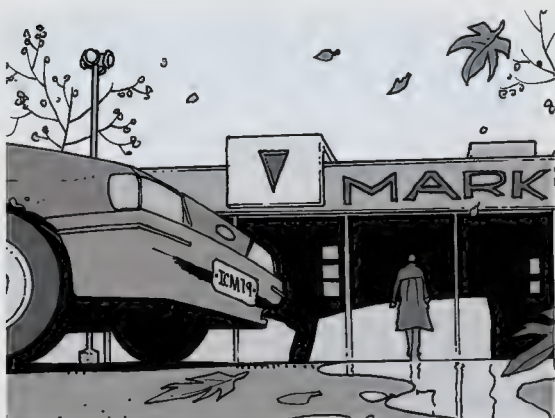
Step 6

Understand: you are a ghost, completely *insubstantial*. Mope about it the entire car ride home.



Step 7

Stop at the supermarket for groceries.



Step 8

Read the ingredients of your favorite dessert. Wonder what exactly sodium carboxymethyl cellulose is. Wonder if it isn't, perhaps, something people shouldn't be eating.



Step 9

Mope all the way to the crowded checkout lanes.



Step 10

As the checkout girl ignores you, remember: ghosts are not seen—they go completely undetected by the human eye.



Step 11

From deep in the ether, zap a spooky missive in her direction.



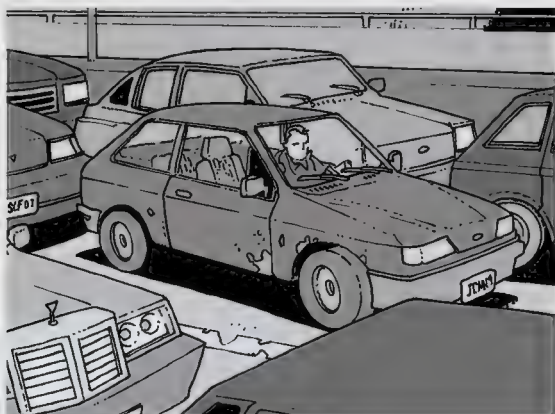
Step 12

Though she'll never see you, remind this living, breathing specimen of your relative proximity.



Step 13

Sit in traffic. Scan the radio stations and avoid, at all costs, the following:



Step 14

Elevator Muzak; anything house- or techno-adjacent; Gregorian chanting; that one interminable Bud Hickey song...



Step 15

Hear a familiar voice emit through the transistor.



Step 16

Recognize it as your own voice. Hear yourself, age nine, plead with the man on the bridge.



Step 17

Remember the *thud* of the man's body hitting the ground. Remember the gurgles.



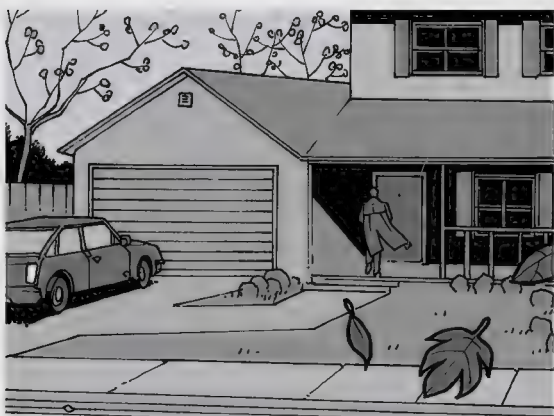
Step 18

Try to forget, but always remember...



Step 19

Steel yourself for another interaction with your wife and kids. Perform a thirty-second meditation.



Step 20

Breathe in through your nose; breathe out through your mouth. Speak your mantra.



Step 21

Phase through the door. Float across the threshold and into your home.



Step 22

See your wife—note how beautiful she remains, year after year after year.



Step 23

Give the answer you always give when asked, "How was your day?"



Step 24

Feel disconnected from the people you love most. Feel stuck, feel lost.



Step 25

See her apply lipstick. Wonder where she's going.



Step 26

Remember that even in your own house, you're a ghost.



Step 27

Do the math in your head.



Step 28

Hear, from your living wife, a bunch of nonsense.



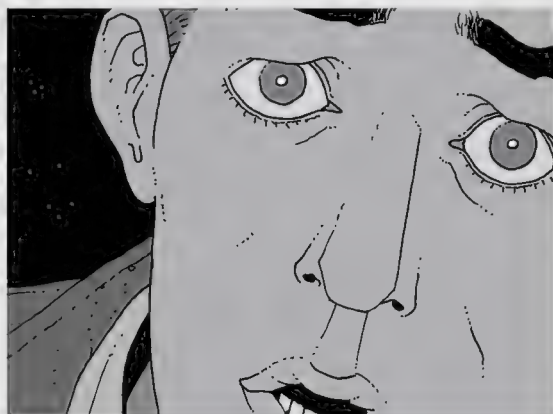
Step 29

Feel her pass through you and make her way to the door.



Step 30

Don't forget about the gutters.



Step 31

Enter the garage to retrieve a ladder.



Step 32

Grope around for (and finally find) the thin string that grants small light to this sorry carport.



Step 33

Wonder why you never seem to actually park your car in here; say a silent prayer for every unused garage across this benighted world.



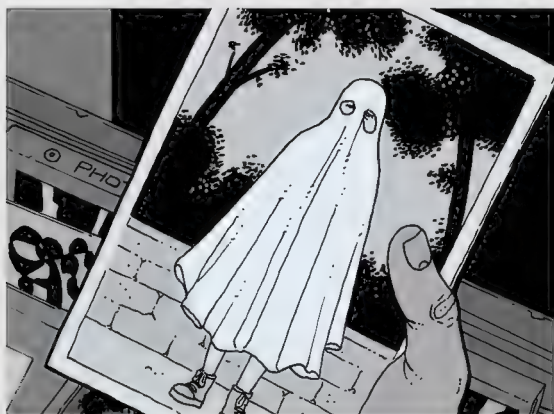
Step 34

See the dusty box of childhood mementos on the floor.



Step 35

See yourself as you were, all those years ago.



Step 36

Wonder what ever happened to Jimmy Trabelli; lament the way all relationships disappear and no one can find 'em.



Step 37

Prepare for your ascent.



Step 38

Float upwards—you're lighter than air.



Step 39

Float up, up—all the way to the very tippy top.



Step 40

Clean the gutters. You are a ghost.



Step 41

Feel sorry for the leaves, how they're separated from their branches; feel sorry for everyone, how they're separated from each other.



Step 42

See it...



Step 43

See your town, its fragmented and haphazard architecture: *Tudor, Colonial Revival, Craftsman*. See each edifice and its sheltered secrets...



Step 44

Remember, from up here, the man on the bridge. Wonder if he saw what you see now...



Step 45

A world full of ghosts.



Step 46

Wonder if the man, pre-THUD, pre-GURGLE was scared or relieved...



Step 47

Feel, as he probably felt, the gentle pushback of air as you extend a limb into the void...



Step 48

Feel it...



Step 49

Think about your kids. Think about your wife.



Step 50

Do the math in your head.



Step 51

Mope down the ladder.



Step 52

Mope back into your house.

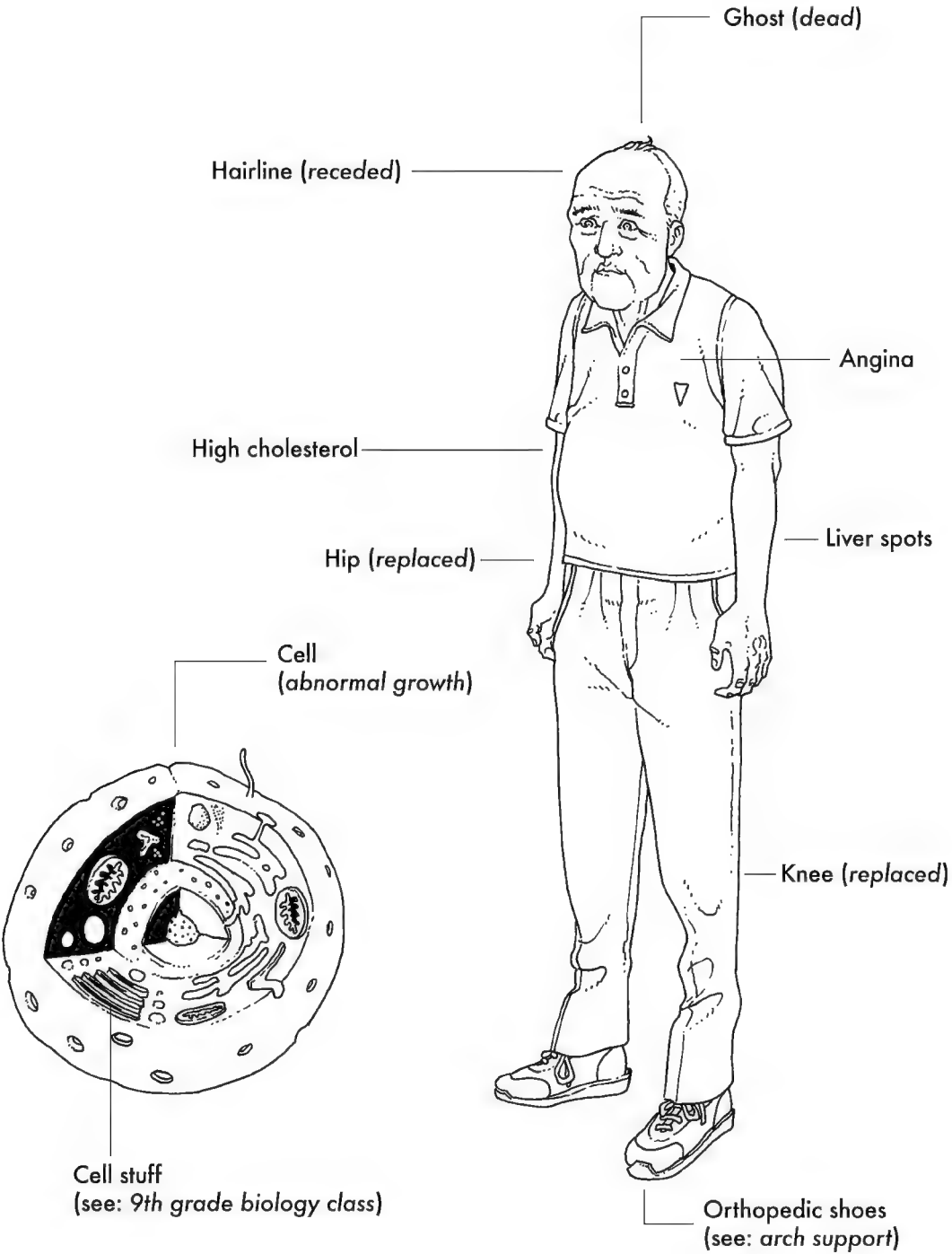


Step 53

Mope for the rest of your life.



Nomenclature (age 78)



Step 1

Get cancer of some kind.



Step 2

Hear the doctor do the math of your mortality.



Step 3

Do the math in your head.



Step 4

Mope back to your car. Get ready for the end.



Step 5

See the scared animal in the Oncology Center parking lot.



Step 6

Note how soft. Imagine a sweater this soft.



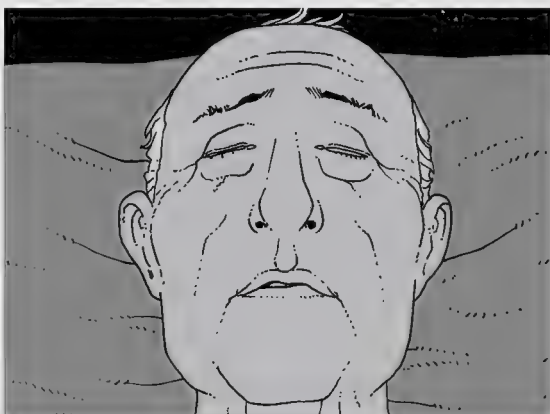
Step 7

Pass quietly in the comfort of your home.



Step 8

Be dead.



Step 9

Float, suddenly, out of your body and into the air above the bed.



Step 10

From four feet aloft, look down at yourself.



Step 11

Attempt, from the afterlife, to communicate with your youngest daughter.



Step 12

Understand: you are a ghost. She can't hear you.



Step 13

Rise up through the ceiling.



Step 14

Emerge from your roof, completely insubstantial.



Step 15

Fly into the crisp air of late October.



Step 16

See, higher than ever before, the humble expanse of your town.



Step 17

From this spectral vantage, hear the multivalent noise of the living: conversations in kitchen nooks; arguments about wall paint; *thuds* and *purrs* and *gurgles* and radio static.



Step 18

Travel through the air.



Step 19

See how small it all gets from on high. See the things of this world shrink until they're nothing but faraway ideas. See them gain significance in the shrinking.



Step 20

Wonder: is this what the falling man saw? Wonder: was it relief on his face after all?



Step 21

Wonder no more; see him next to you in the sky.



Step 22

Speaking in a language made of light, join hands with the falling man.



Step 23

Fly together—over your town, over every town.



Step 24

Float through the air above a categorically substantial world.



Step 25

See the story of Casper, with all it's sweet and bitter vicissitudes.



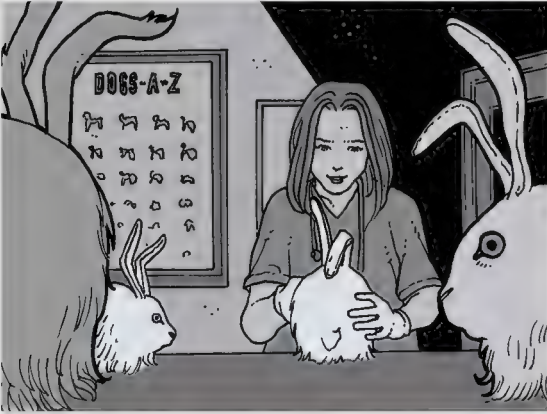
Step 26

Your wife and her massage therapist, married, living a long life together, always seeking peace...



Step 27

Your oldest daughter—a veterinarian—saving the lives of countless lesser creatures.



Step 28

No, not lesser. Nothing is lesser. Understand from up here:



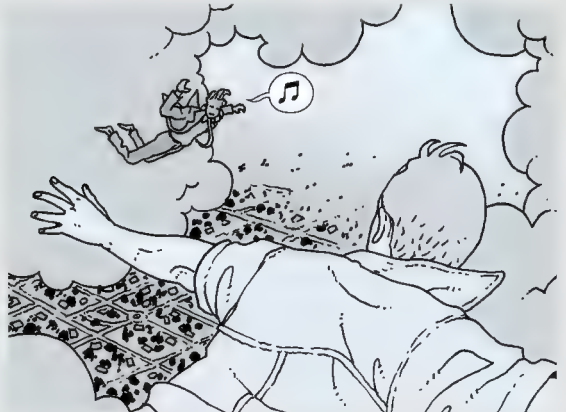
Step 29

All things are one thing.



Step 30

Every story...



Step 31

...is a ghost story.



Step 32

Climb higher; ascend forever.



Step 33

And then, when you think you're as high as you can go...



Step 34

Climb some more. You are a ghost...



Step 35

But you are seen.



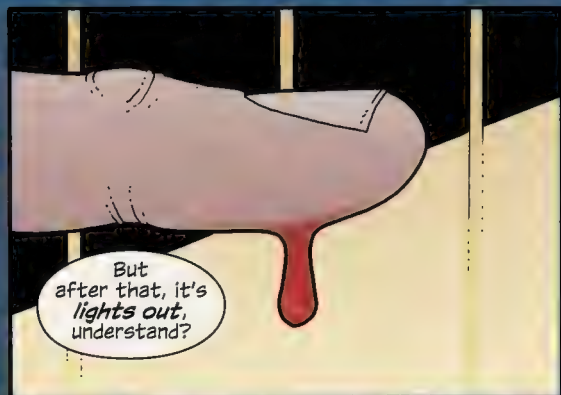
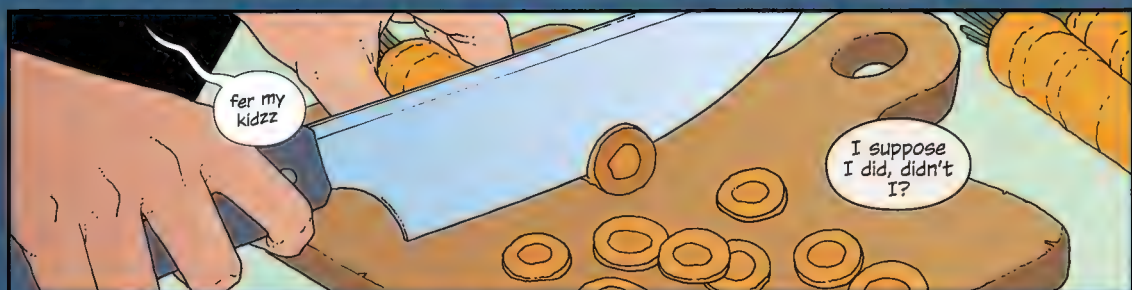
For Kids

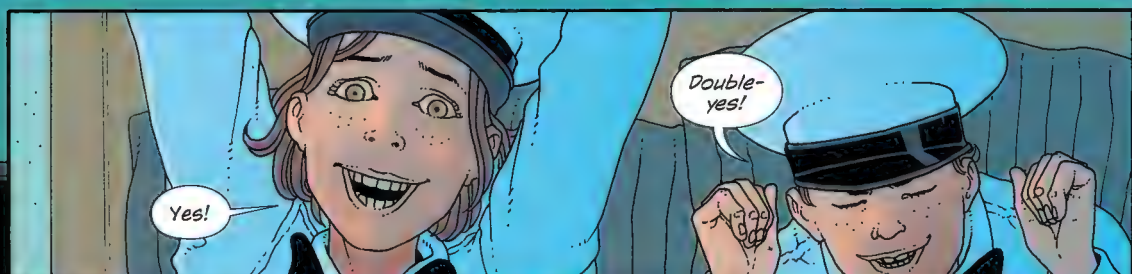
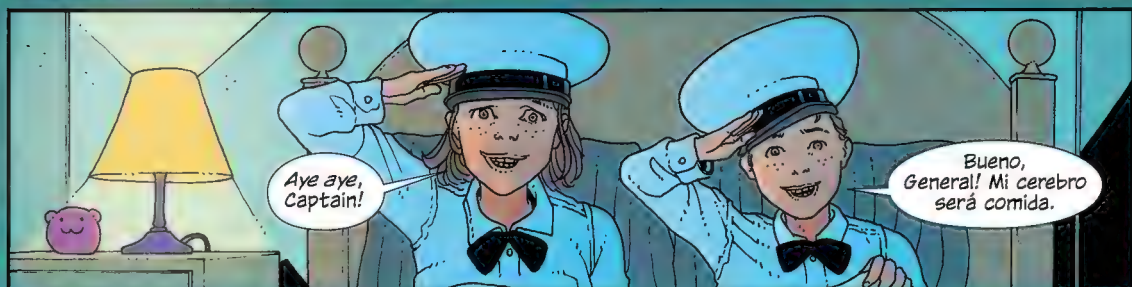
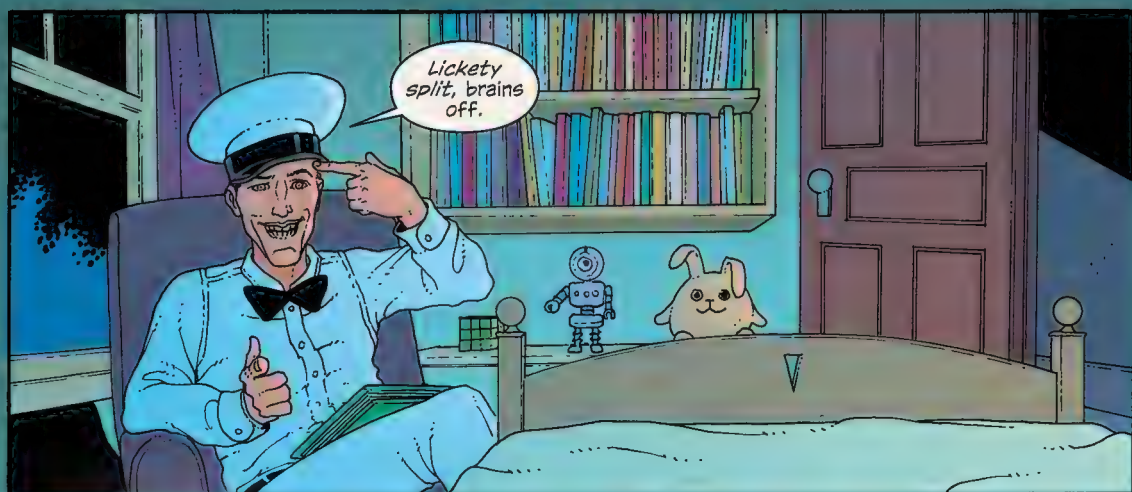
Chapter Twenty





Alright,
little bugs. It's
time for beddy-
bye.

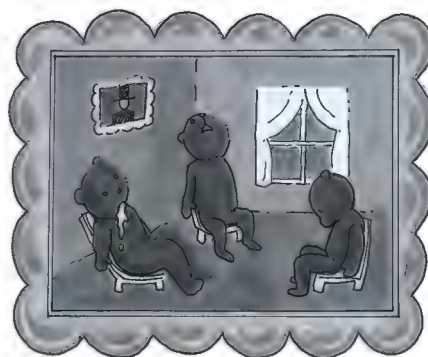




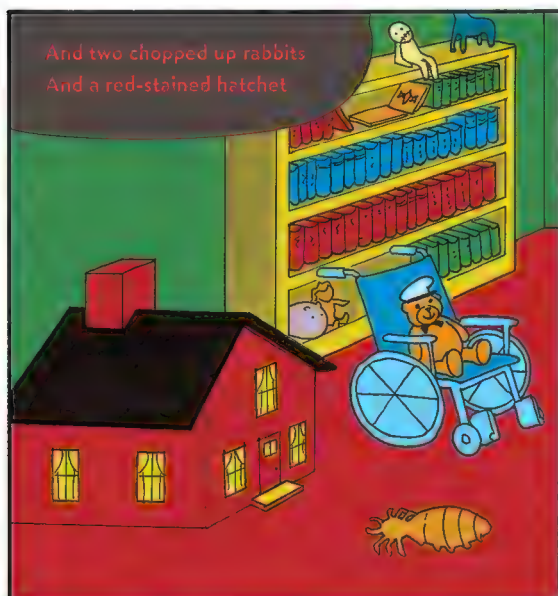
In the small padded room
 There was a tissue box
 And a boy with a balloon
 And a picture of—



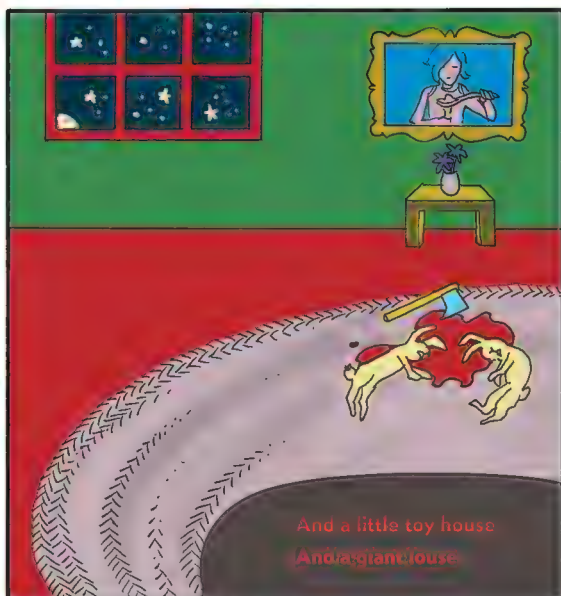
A girl heating up a spoon



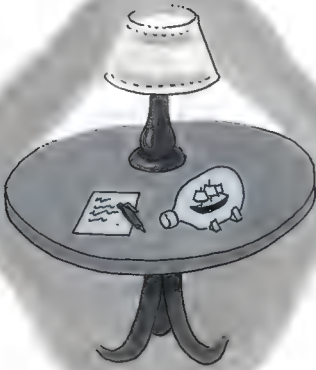
And there were three cruddy bears sitting on chairs



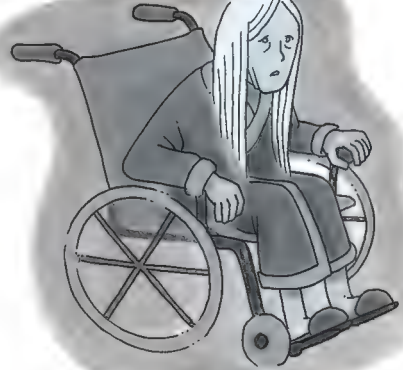
And two chopped up rabbits
 And a red-stained hatchet



And a little toy house
 And a giant house



And a bottle and a boat and a suicide note



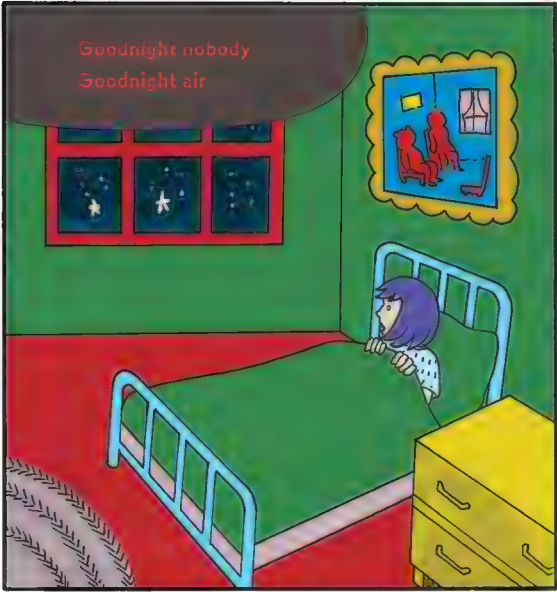
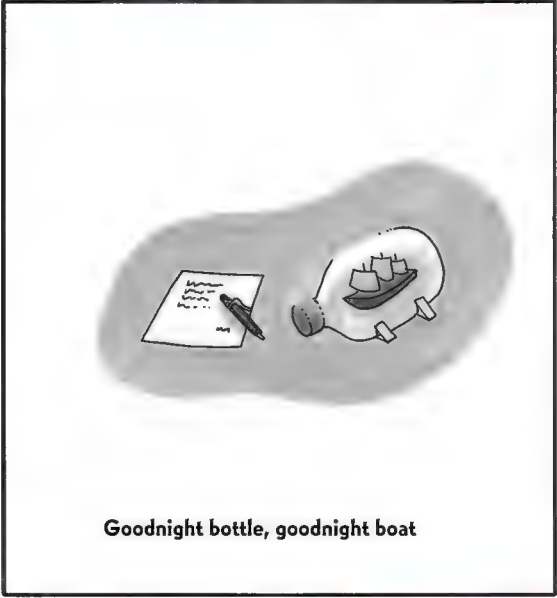
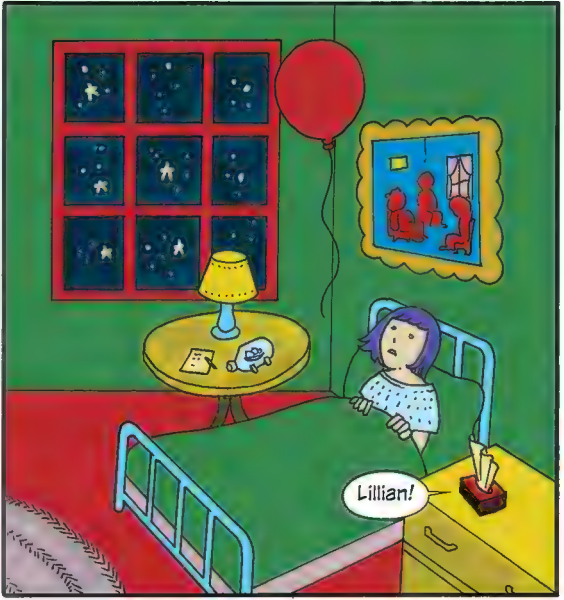
And a sick old lady whispering, "It's the one that I wrote."



Goodnight girl who's heating a spoon



Goodnight louse and goodnight house

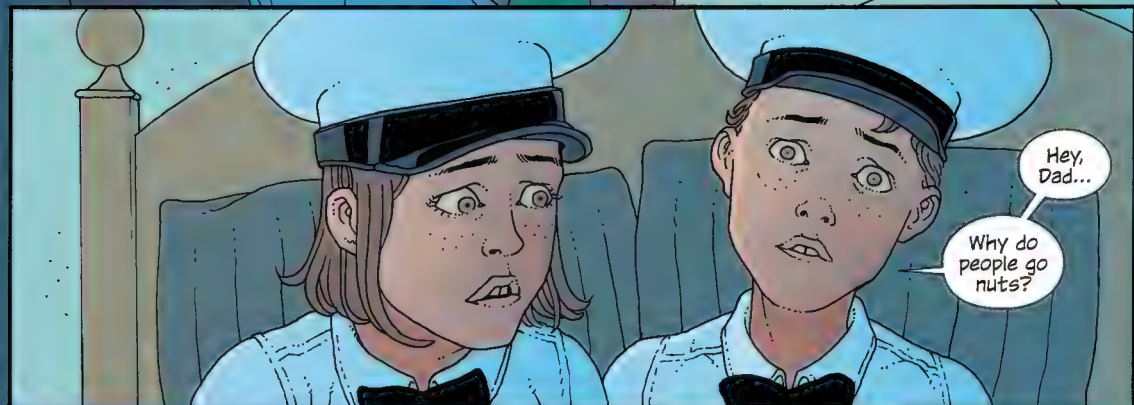


Goodnight to the things not really there



She was crazy, wasn't she?

I knew it.

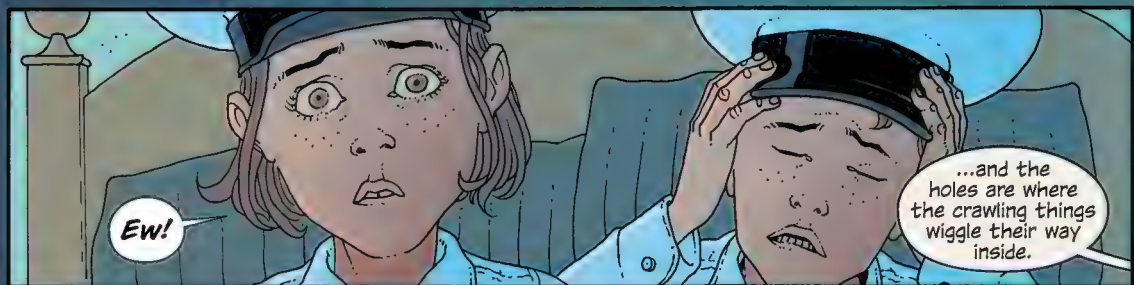


Hey, Dad...

Why do people go nuts?



It's because their brains are mushy and full of holes.



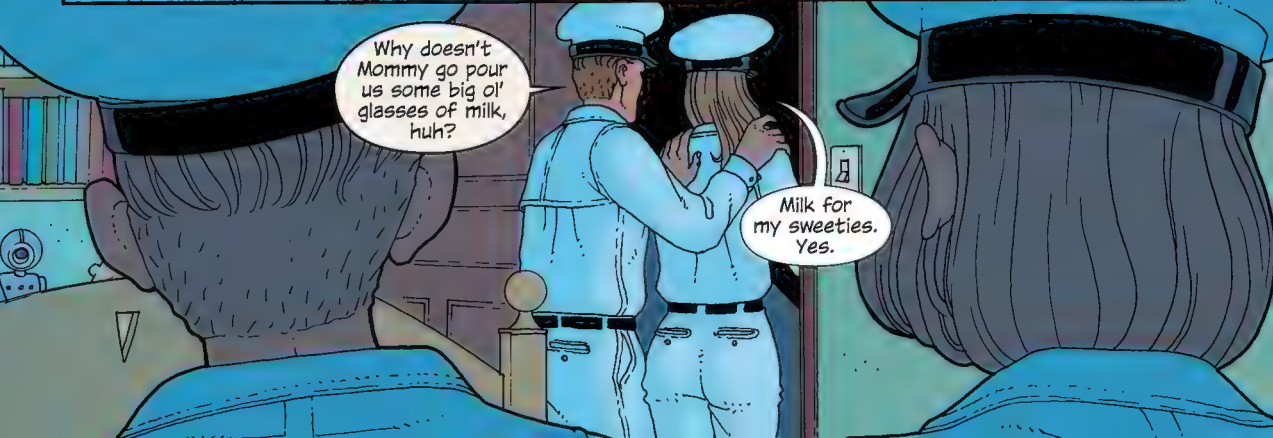
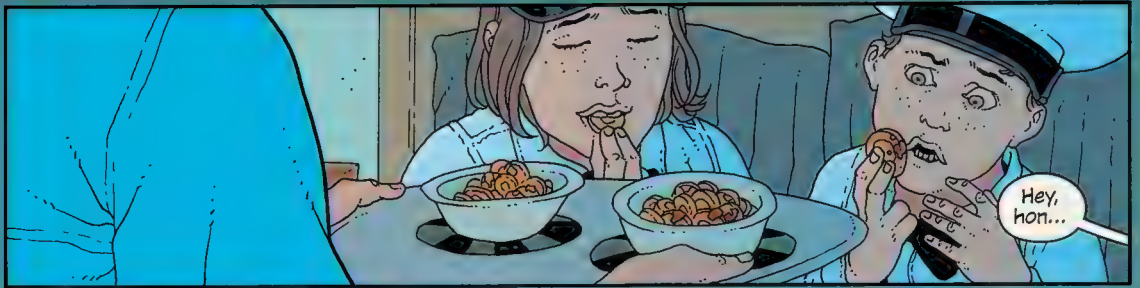
Ew!

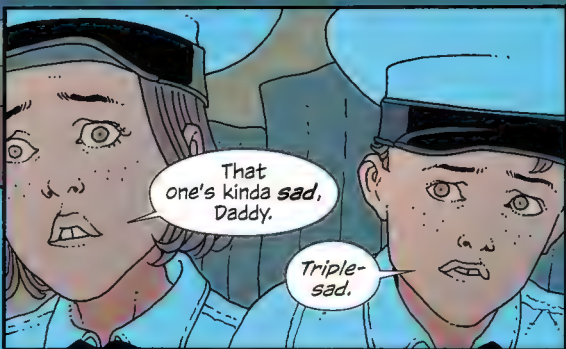
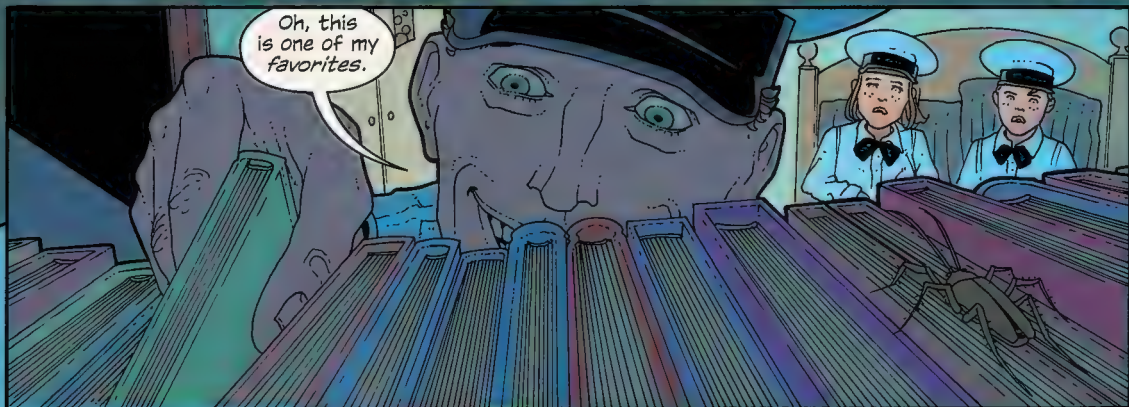
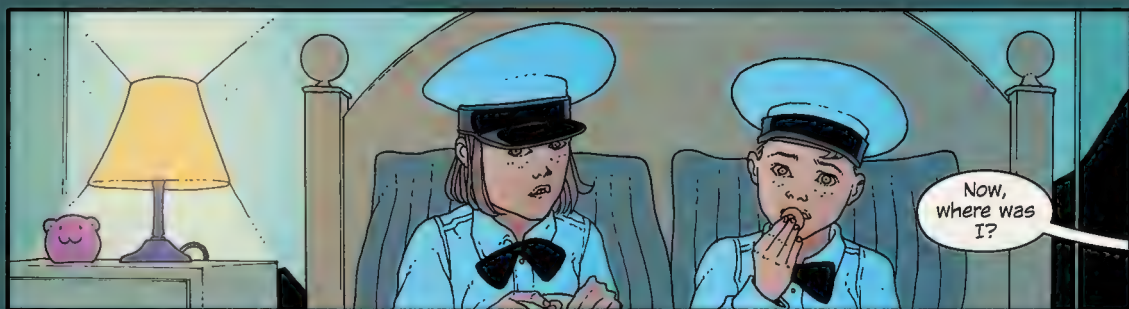
...and the holes are where the crawling things wiggle their way inside.

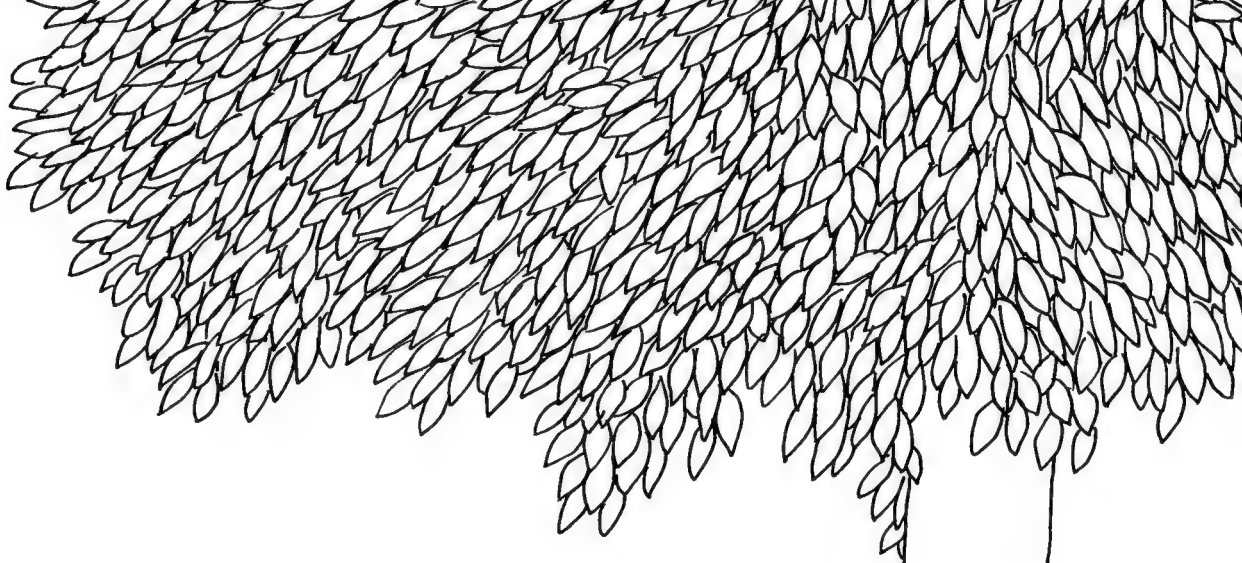


People are so susceptible to bad ideas.

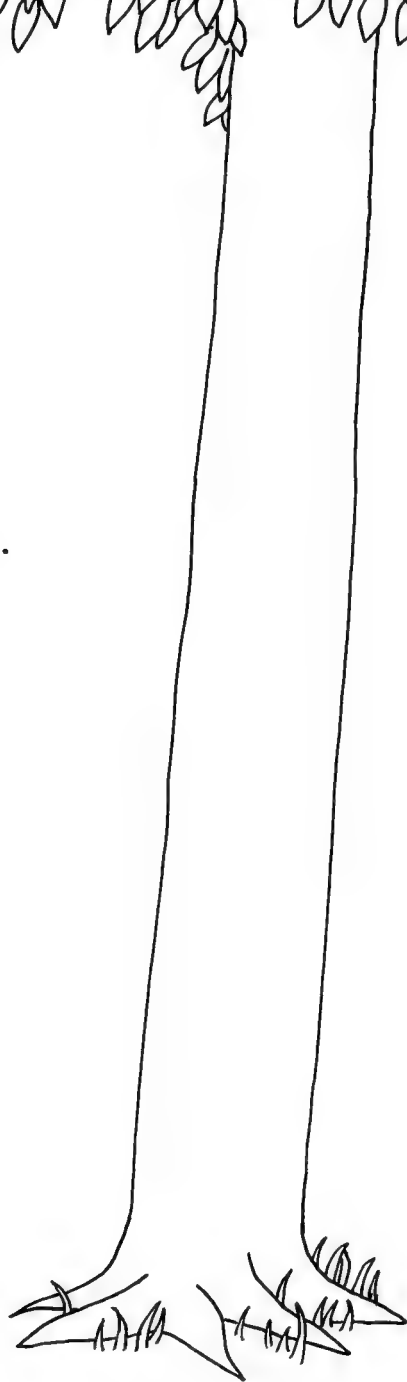
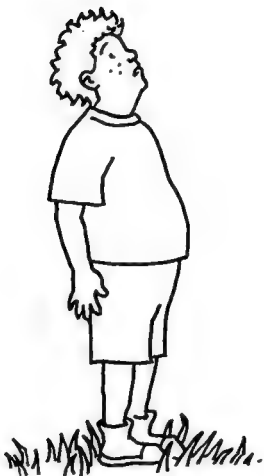
Did somebody say nighttime carrots?



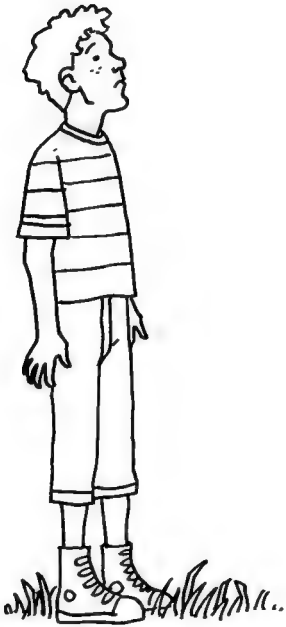


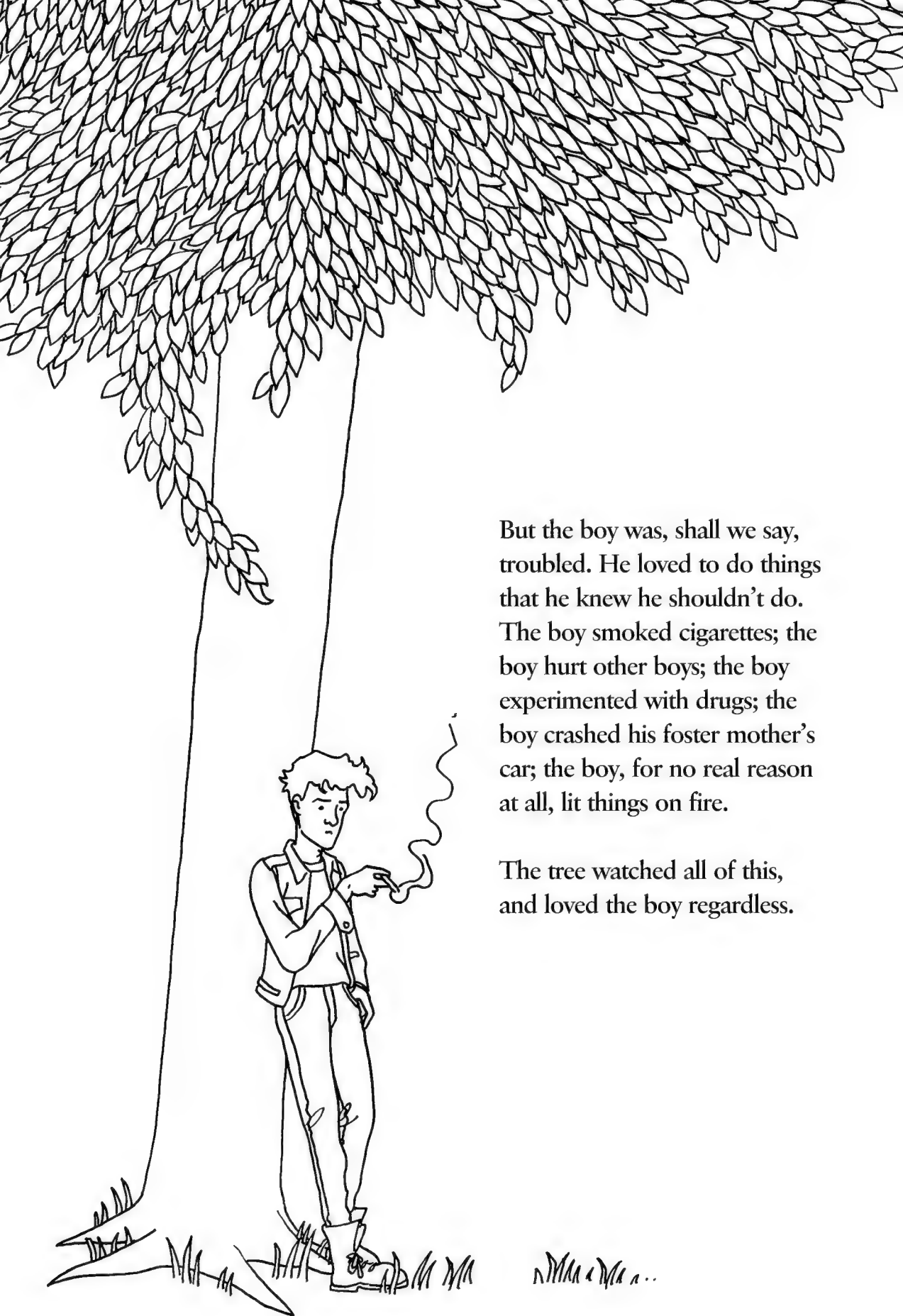


Once there was a tree who loved a boy...



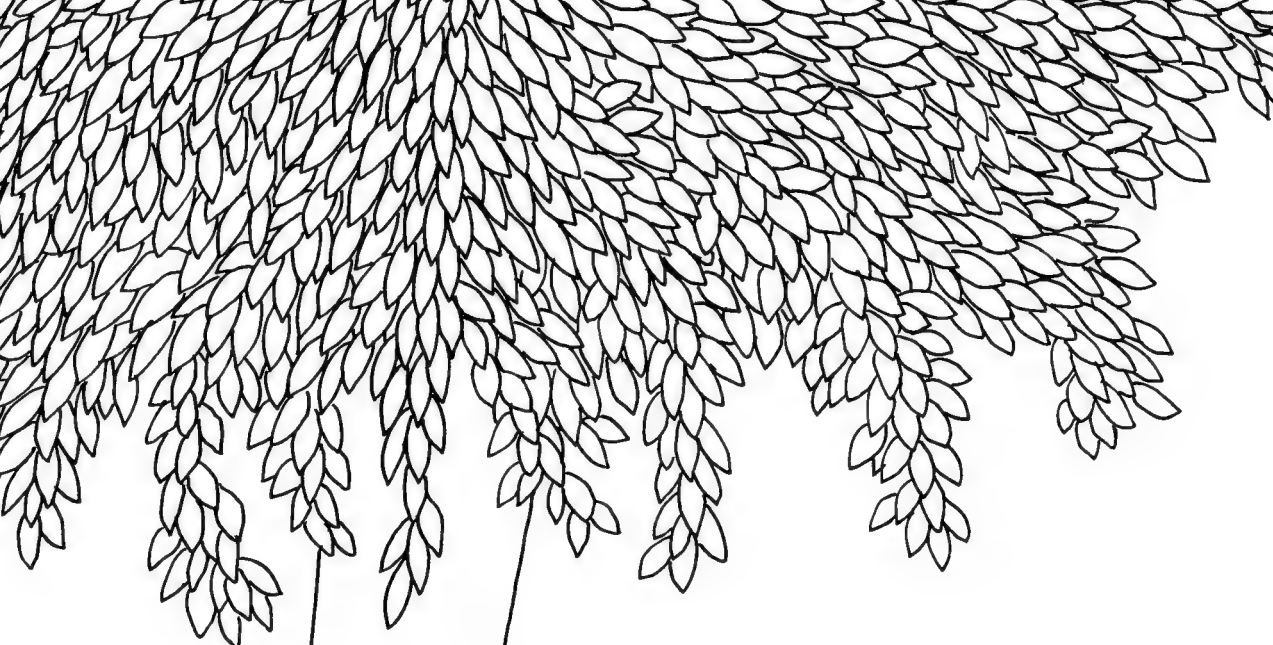
And the tree watched
as the boy grew up.





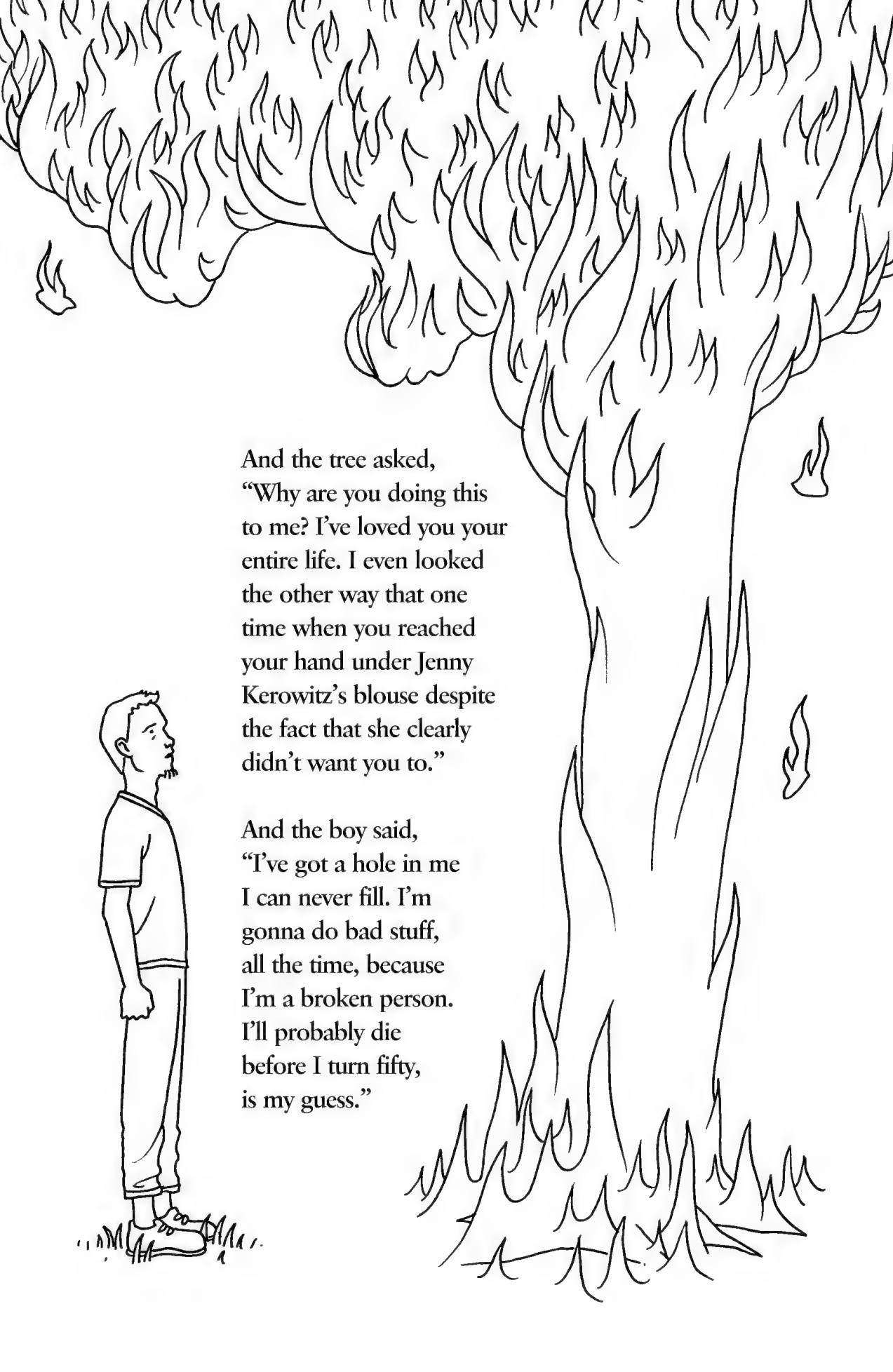
But the boy was, shall we say,
troubled. He loved to do things
that he knew he shouldn't do.
The boy smoked cigarettes; the
boy hurt other boys; the boy
experimented with drugs; the
boy crashed his foster mother's
car; the boy, for no real reason
at all, lit things on fire.

The tree watched all of this,
and loved the boy regardless.



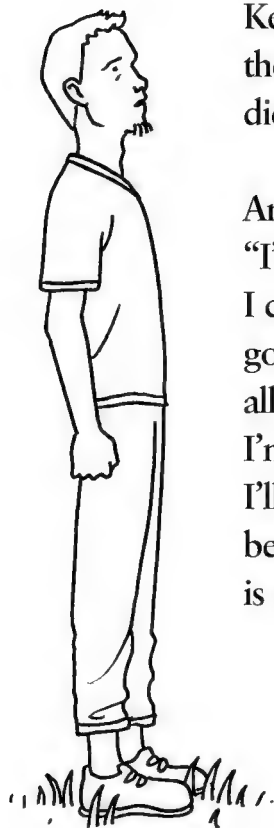
Until one day the boy poured
kerosene onto the tree, and took
a match to its bark.



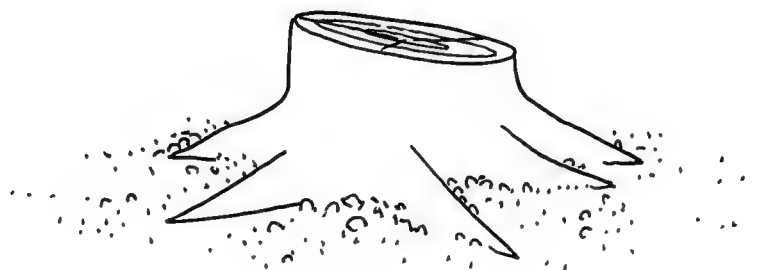
A black and white line drawing of a large tree. The tree's canopy is composed of many flame-like shapes, suggesting it is on fire. The trunk is thick and textured with vertical lines. At the base of the tree, there are more flame-like shapes on the ground. To the left of the tree, a young boy stands in profile, looking up at the tree. He is wearing a short-sleeved shirt and pants. The background is plain white.

And the tree asked,
“Why are you doing this
to me? I’ve loved you your
entire life. I even looked
the other way that one
time when you reached
your hand under Jenny
Kerowitz’s blouse despite
the fact that she clearly
didn’t want you to.”

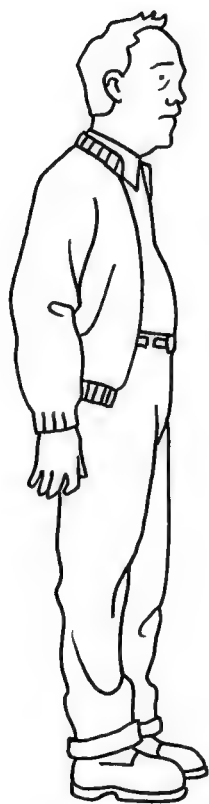
And the boy said,
“I’ve got a hole in me
I can never fill. I’m
gonna do bad stuff,
all the time, because
I’m a broken person.
I’ll probably die
before I turn fifty,
is my guess.”



And the tree burned down to nothing.



And since that tree was
on a piece of land outside the
jurisdiction of certain preservation
laws, a developer paved the forest
and sold the plot to one of those
overbright big-box stores.



And the boy was right: he died
in his forties in some kind of
accident on the factory floor
where he worked. The specifics
don't really matter.

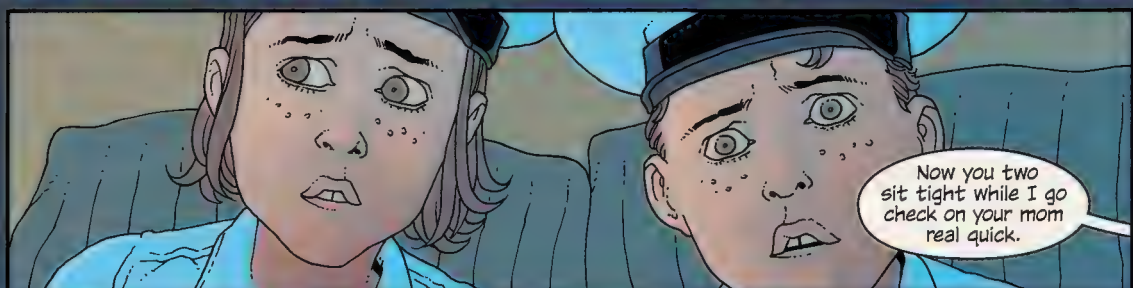
The hole in the boy was never
filled.

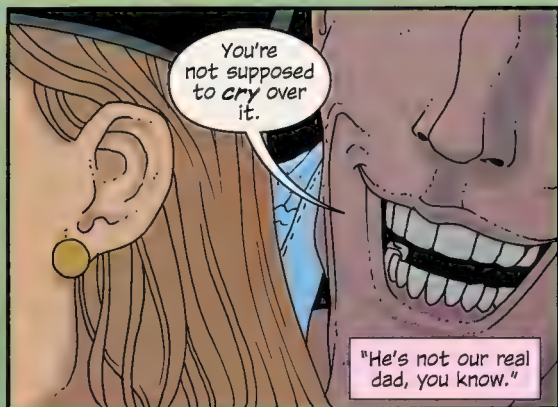
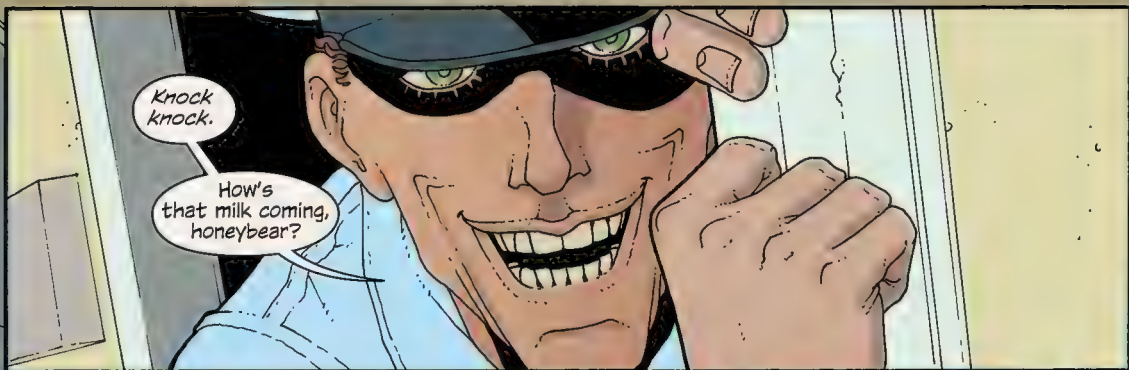
The tree was long gone.

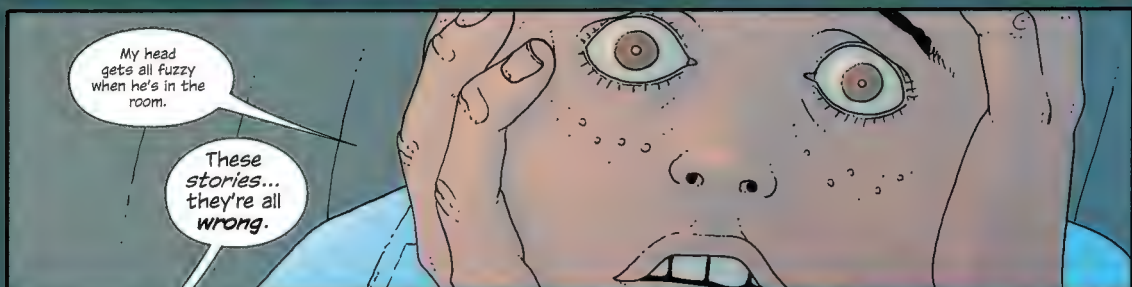
And many more trees would
soon follow.

Listen close and you can hear
another one being chopped
down, screaming,
“But I loved you! I loved you!”



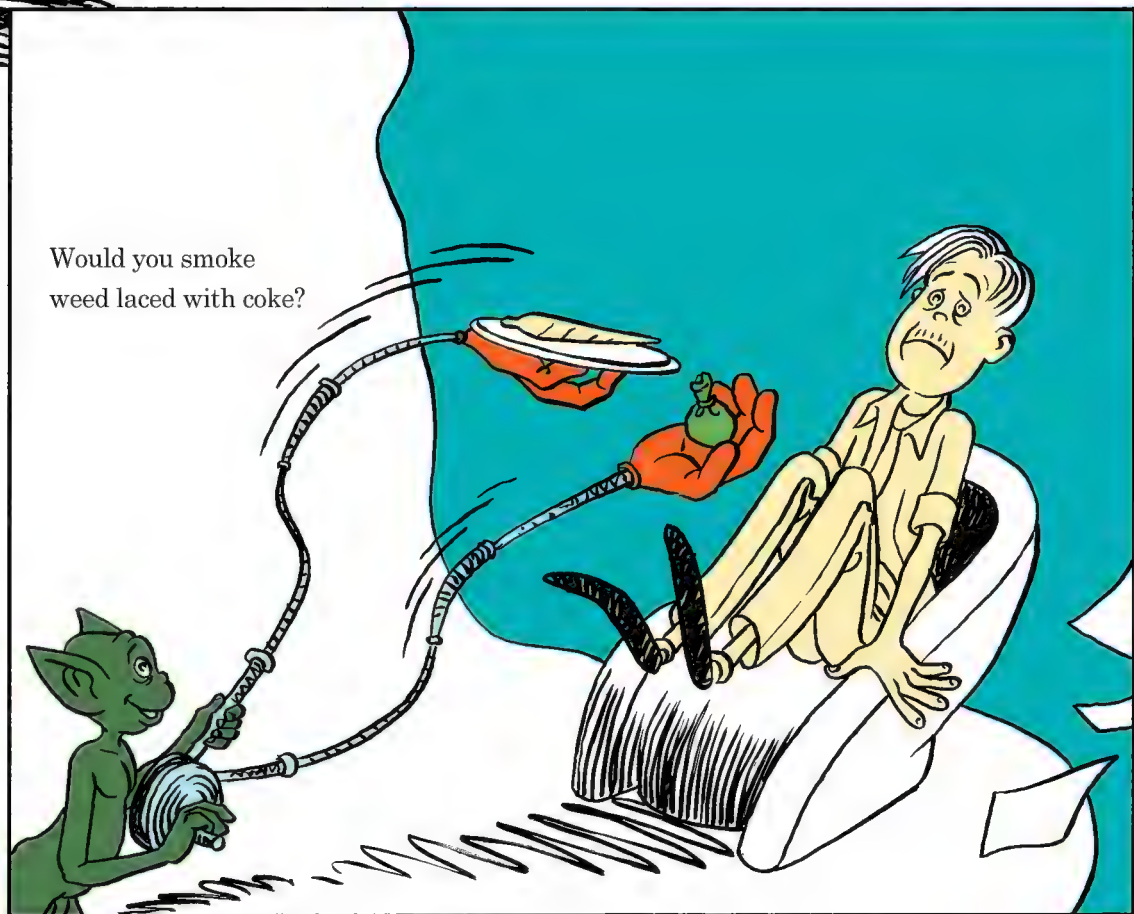






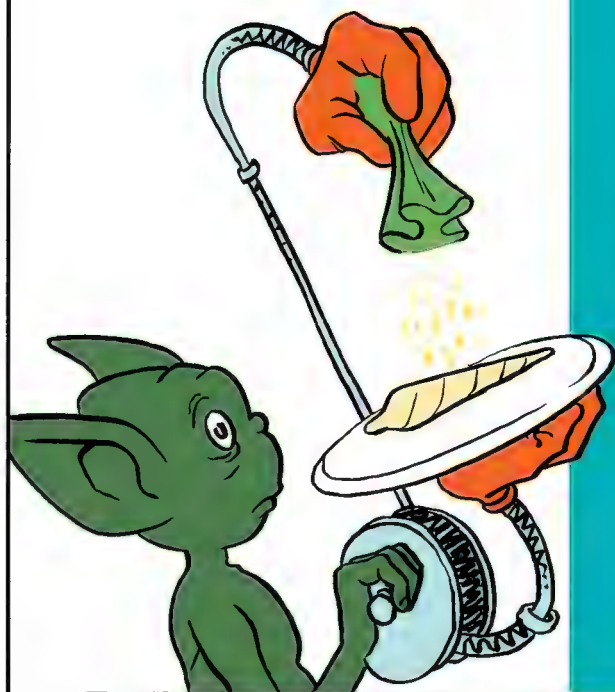


That Grem-a-loke!
That Grem-a-loke!
I do not like
that Grem-a-loke!



Would you smoke
weed laced with coke?

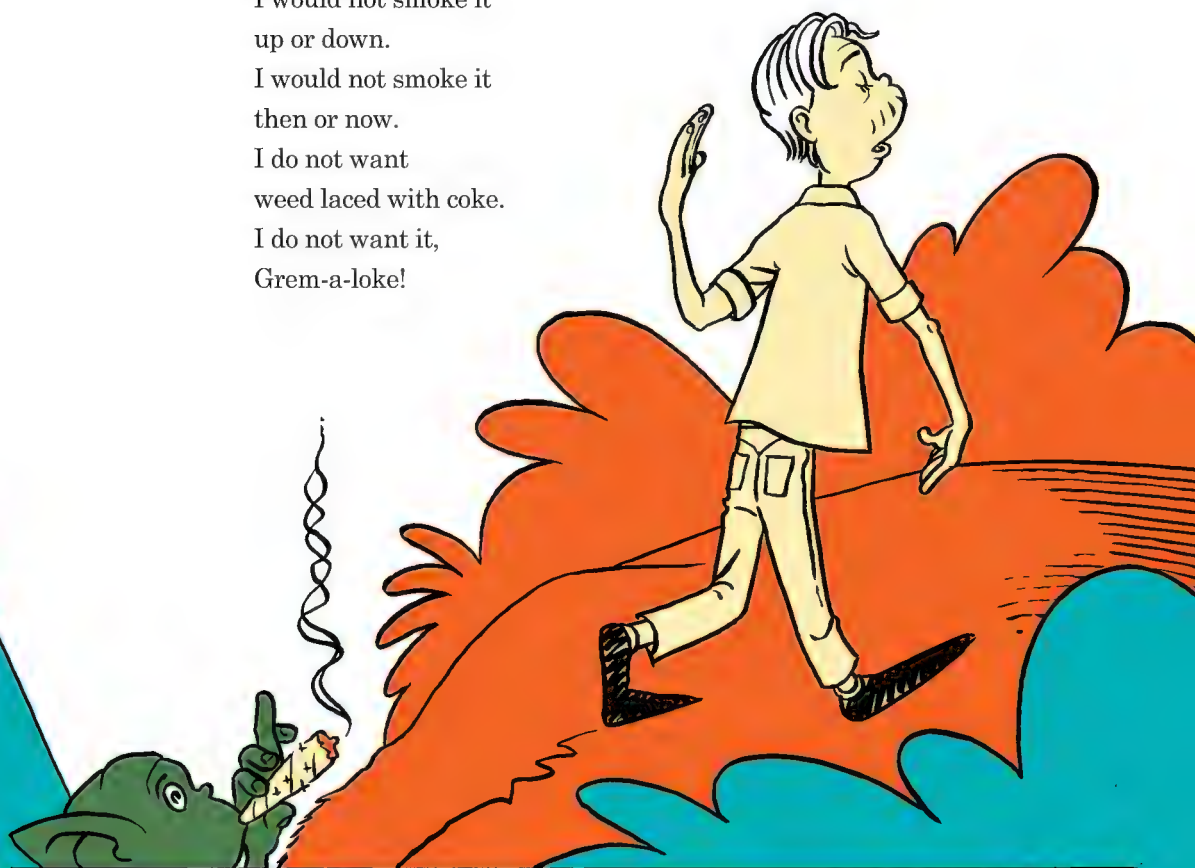
I would not smoke
weed laced with coke.



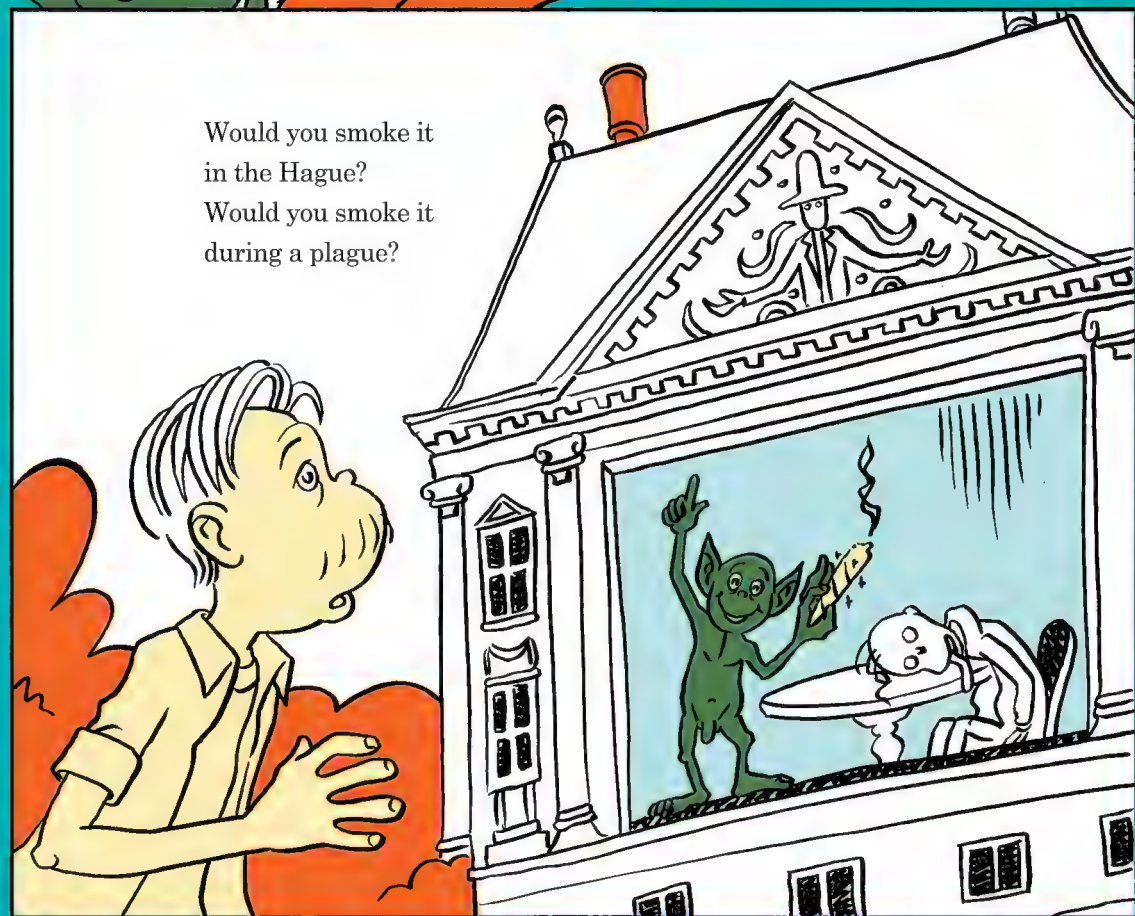
Would you smoke it
up or down?



I would not smoke it
up or down.
I would not smoke it
then or now.
I do not want
weed laced with coke.
I do not want it,
Grem-a-loke!



Would you smoke it
in the Hague?
Would you smoke it
during a plague?



I would not smoke it
in the Hague.

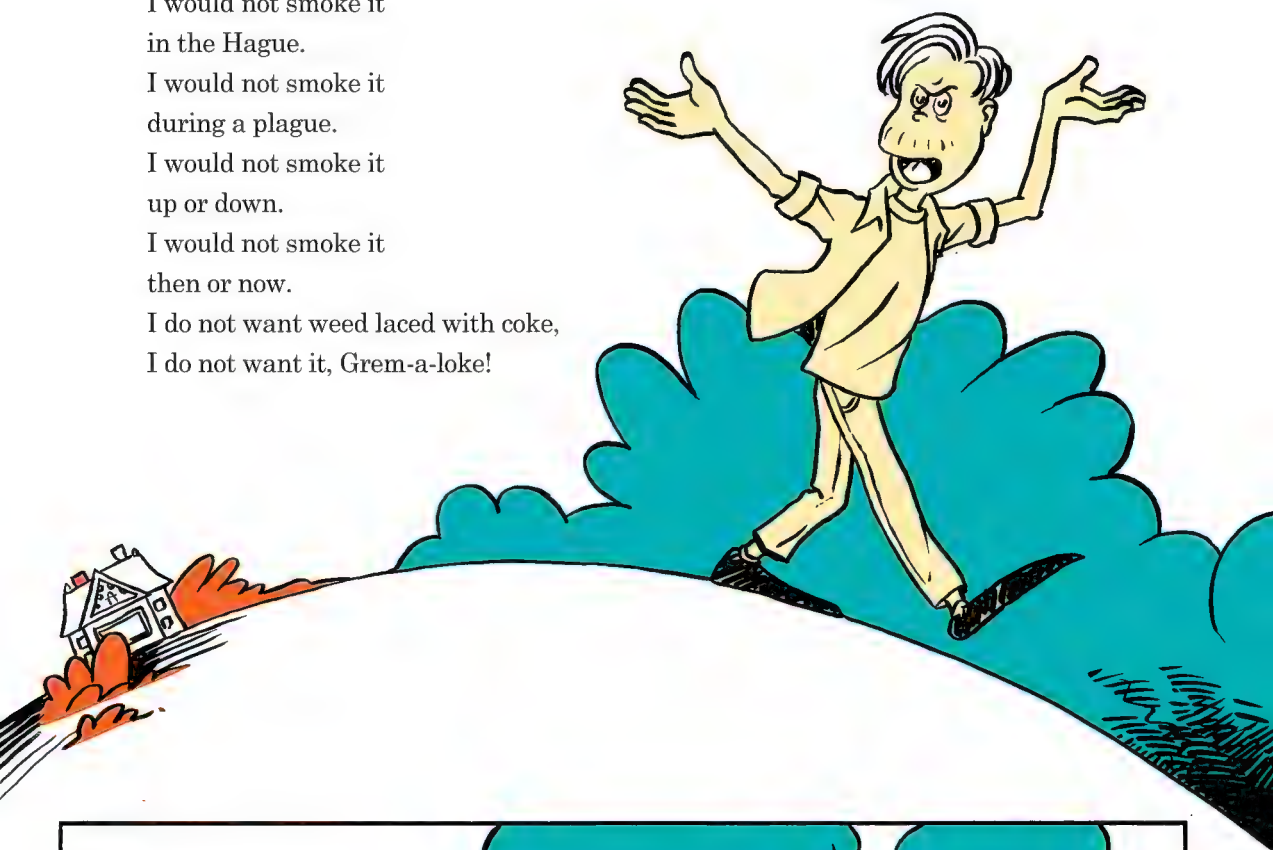
I would not smoke it
during a plague.

I would not smoke it
up or down.

I would not smoke it
then or now.

I do not want weed laced with coke,

I do not want it, Grem-a-loke!

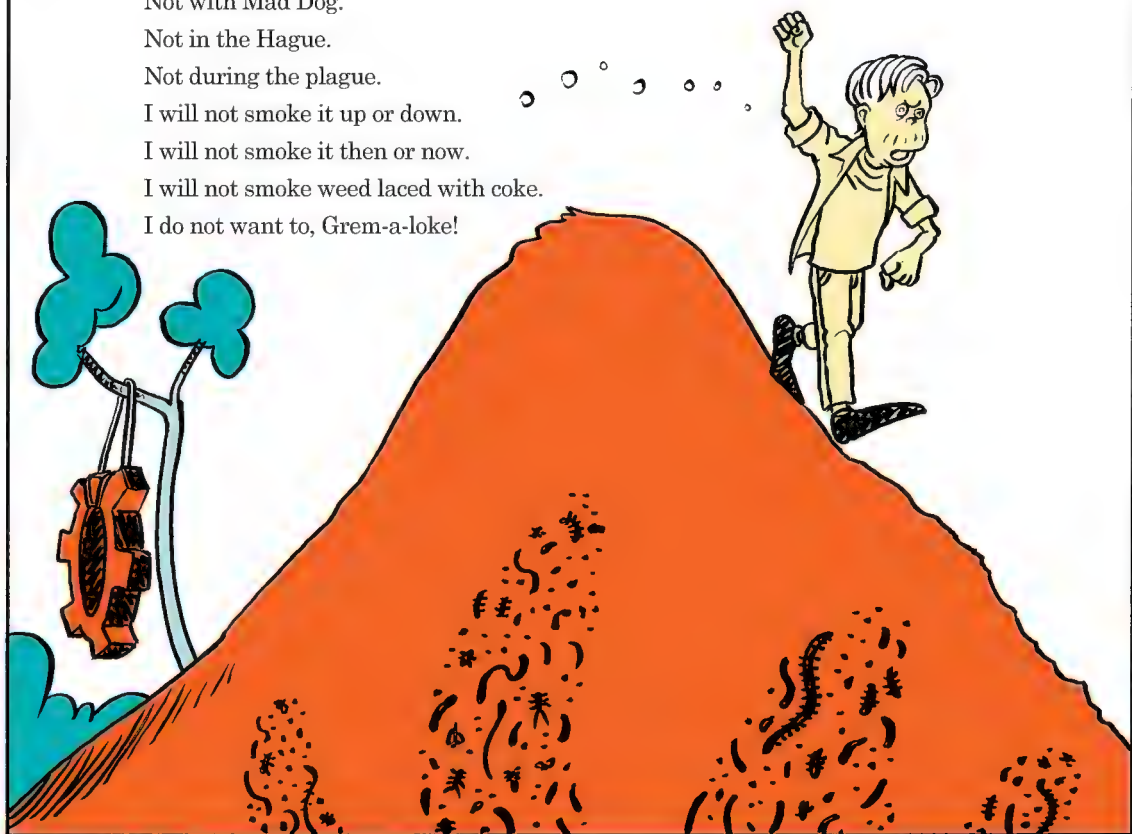


Would you smoke it
in a cog?

Would you smoke it
with Mad Dog?



Not in a cog.
Not with Mad Dog.
Not in the Hague.
Not during the plague.
I will not smoke it up or down.
I will not smoke it then or now.
I will not smoke weed laced with coke.
I do not want to, Grem-a-loke!

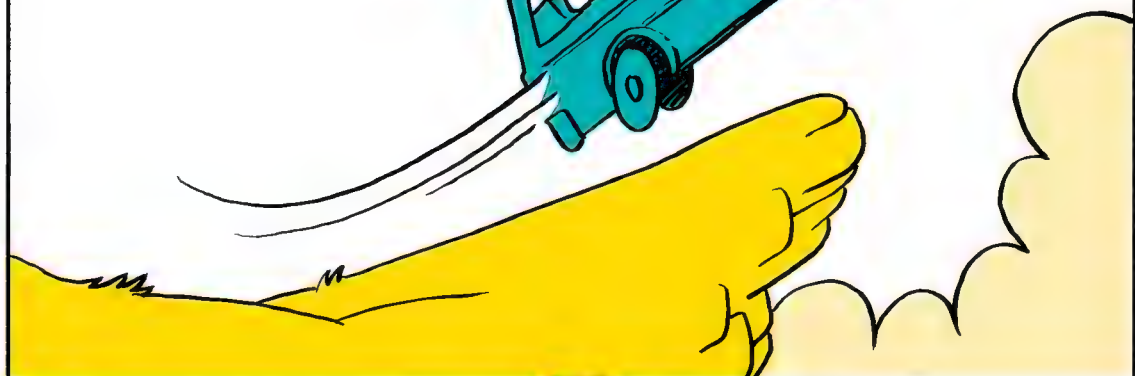


Would you? Could you?
On the hood?
Smoke it! Do it!
You'll feel good!

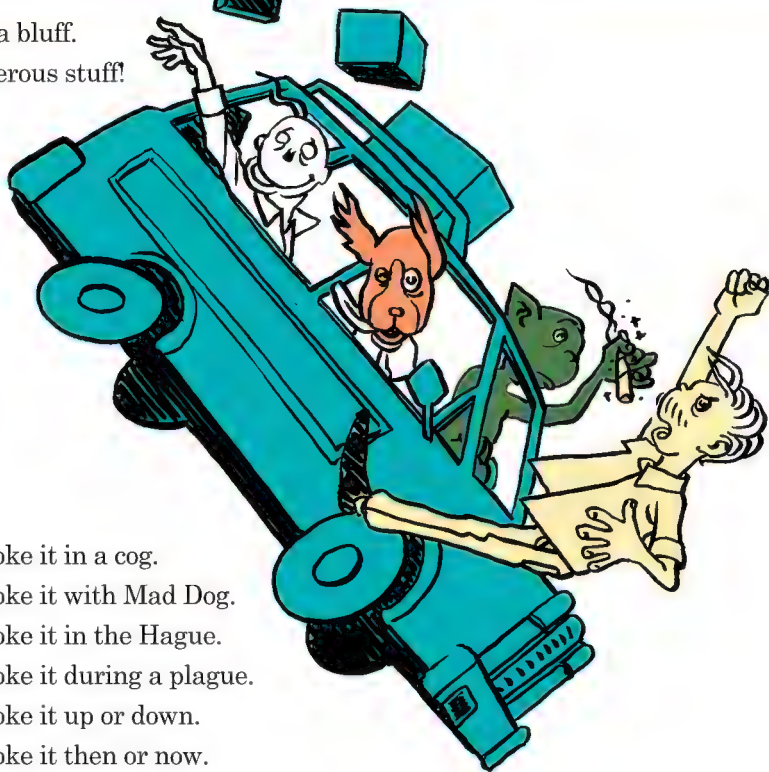
I will not,
won't not,
on the hood.



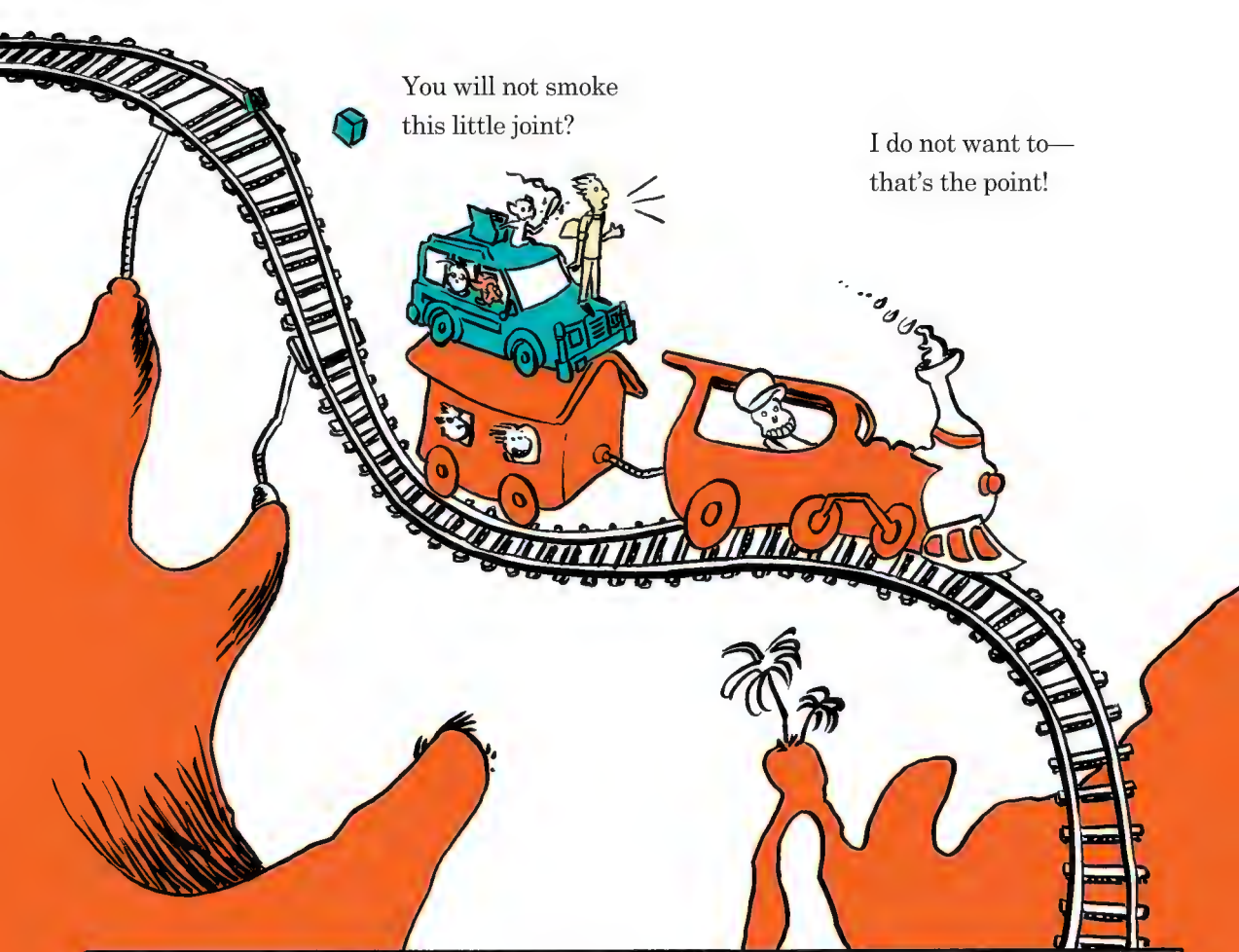
You might like it.
Take a puff.
You might enjoy it,
off a bluff!



I would not, could not, off a bluff.
Not on the hood! It's dangerous stuff!



I will not smoke it in a cog.
I will not smoke it with Mad Dog.
I will not smoke it in the Hague.
I will not smoke it during a plague.
I will not smoke it up or down.
I will not smoke it then or now.
I will not smoke weed laced with coke.
Ain't gonna happen, Grem-a-loke.



You will not smoke
this little joint?

I do not want to—
that's the point!



Maybe with this
figglybump?

What
the fuck's a
figglybump?

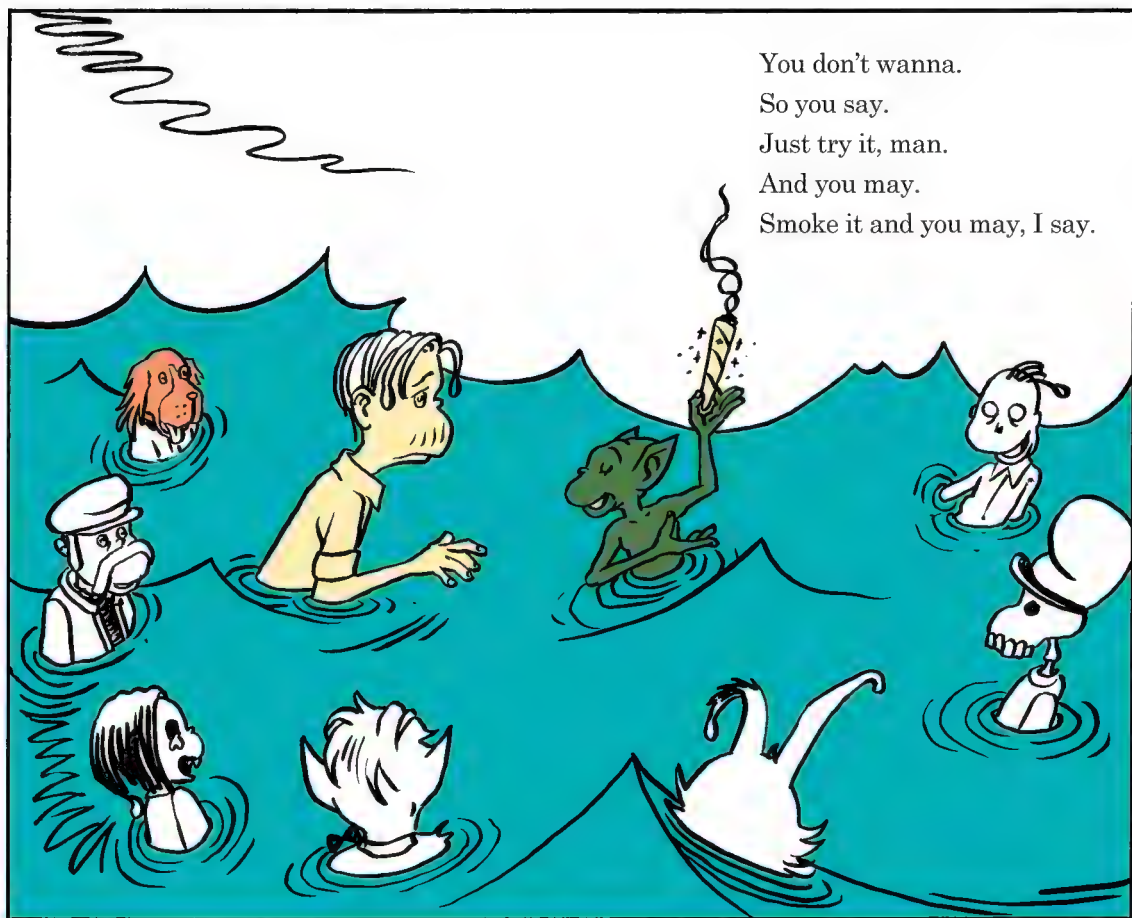
Would you, could you,
as we jump?



I could not, shall not, as we jump.
And no way with a figglybump.
I will not smoke it in the Hague.
I ain't inhaling while there's a plague.
Not in a cog! Not with mad dog!
Not on the hood, you ne'er-do-good!
I will not smoke it up or down.
I will not smoke it then or now.
I will not smoke it WHILE WE DROWN.

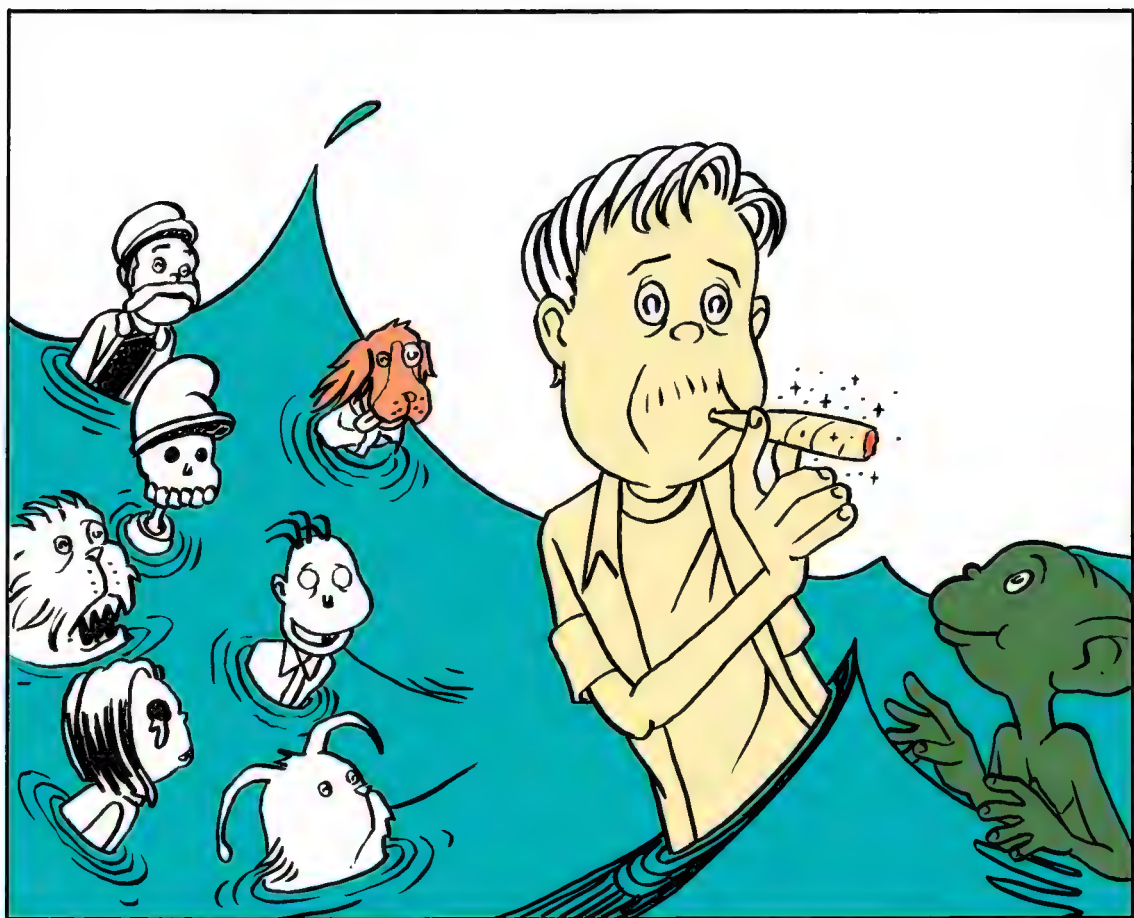


You don't wanna.
So you say.
Just try it, man.
And you may.
Smoke it and you may, I say.



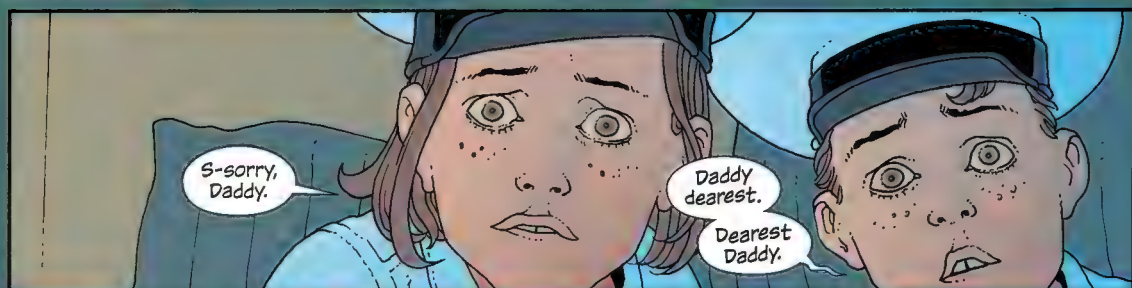
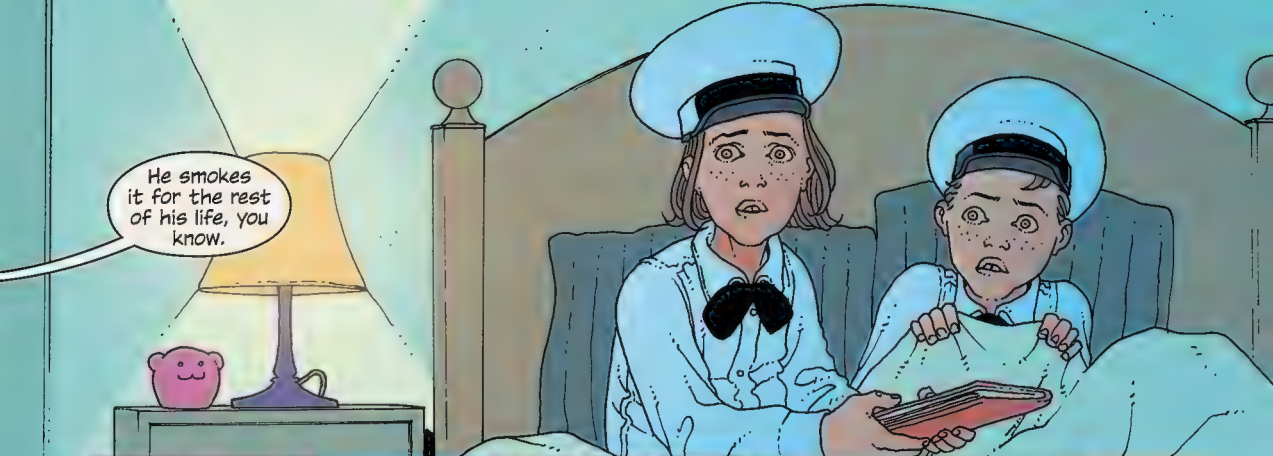
Gremlin!
If you will let me be,
I'll smoke the thing.
You will see.





Wow!
I like weed laced with coke!
I do! I like it, Grem-a-loke!
And I would smoke it in a sepulcher.
And I would smoke it with a vulture...







Little Jane was very plain, and lived a life of plenty.



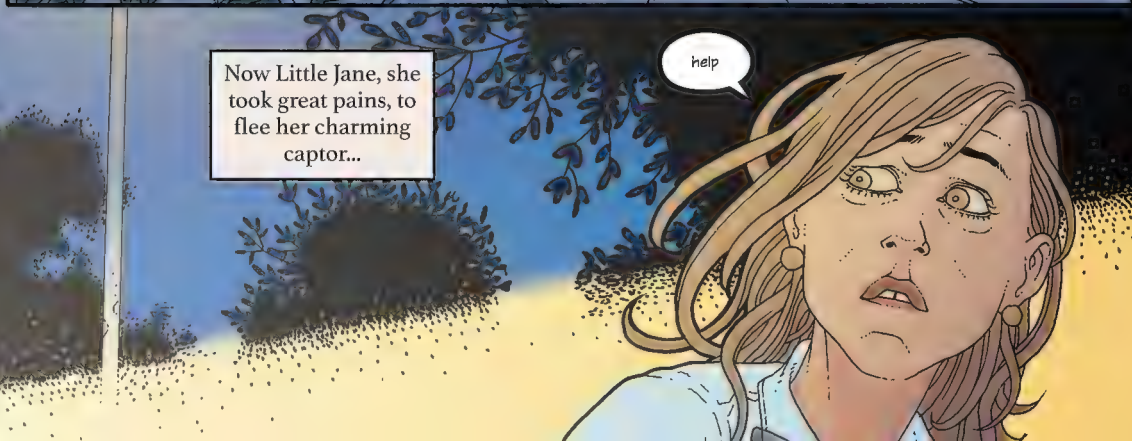
She married Gary (who now looks scary), back when they both were twenty.



But life, you know, is long and strange—and full of small frustrations.



The world gets warped (mixed up! deranged!), despite your lamentations.



Now Little Jane, she took great pains, to flee her charming captor...

help

She waved at all the small-town cars—but WHOOSH, they whizzed right past her.

HELP ME!

And then, poor Jane, damn near insane, head hot and heart a-flutter...

Approached a cow (a burger, now), and asked:

Are you my mother?

And that, my friends, is where it ends; the screws were put upon her...

...as she canonized her favorite guys:

Saint
Manson! Gacy!
Donner!

So Little Jane (her arms restrained) was hauled off in the wagon...



DON'T LET THE BED BUGS BITE!

COVER GALLERY



What follows are variant covers from the fifth volume of **ICE CREAM MAN**, by Michael Walsh, Emma Ríos (with Miquel Muerto), Gabriel Walta, and Martín Morazzo (with Chris O'Halloran & Good Old Neon).

Defund the police.



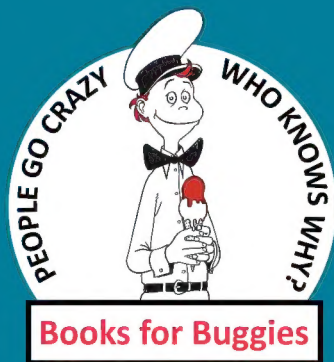
Ice
Cream
Man





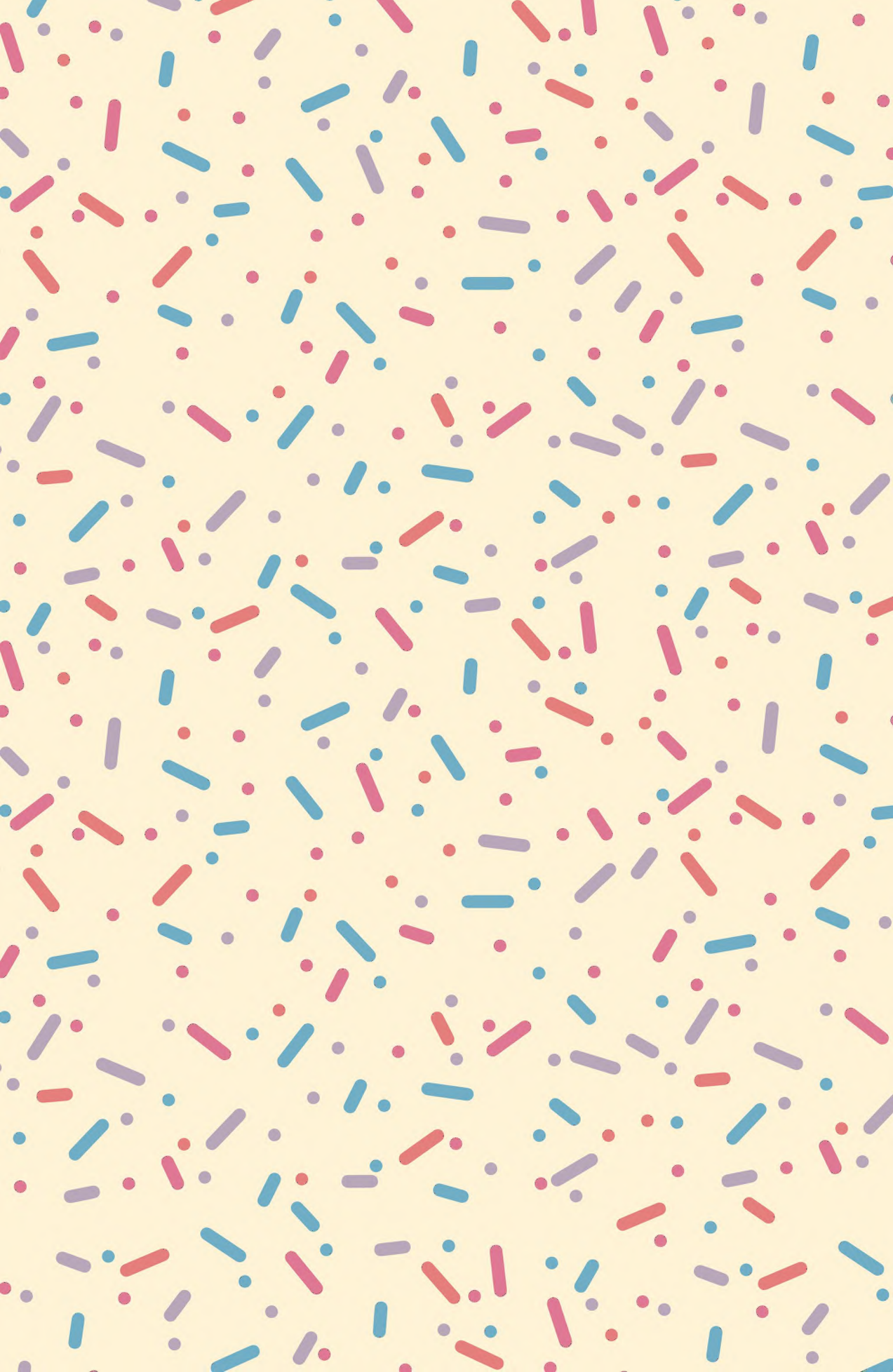
ICE CREAM MAN™

Issue # 20
\$3.99 US



By
W. Maxwell Prince
Martin Morazzo
Chris O'Halloran





Ice Cream Man is back—see here four more strange and sad stories of the horror-adjacent anthology series. See here a tetrad of atypical tales: a suppurating superhero satire; a lamentation of lost memory; a field guide for being a ghost; a rotten retelling of your favorite children's stories. See here some other confections, too.

See here, see here!

This fifth volume collects issues 17-20 of the critically acclaimed horror anthology from Eisner-nominated writer **W. Maxwell Prince** (*ONE WEEK IN THE LIBRARY*, *The Electric Sublime*), artist **Martin Morazzo** (*She Could Fly*, *The Electric Sublime*), and colorist **Chris O'Halloran** (*Lockjaw*, *The Punisher*).

"A perfectly bitter confection for those with a taste for short-form shockers."

—*Publishers Weekly*

"You'll never look at your double-scoop the same way again."

—*Vulture/NYMag*

"We loved it like we love mint chocolate chip ice cream, which is to say we loved it a lot."

—*Nerdist*

"You'll want a scoop of this comic because we're in for a treat."

—*Geek.com*

"F*cking awesome. The writing is strange and deeply unsettling, and the artwork is gorgeous."

—**Brian K. Vaughan**

(SAGA, PAPERGIRLS)

"Incredibly good."

—*The Oregonian*

"Will have you questioning everything."

—*Amazon Book Review*



Horror
Rated **M** / Mature
Collects ICE CREAM MAN 17-20

